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MODERN HUMANISTS

SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF CARLYLE, MILL, EMERSON
ARNOLD, RUSKIN, AND SPENCER

WITH

AN EPILOGUE ON SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

BY

JOHN M. ROBERTSON

AUTHOR OF "ESSAYS TOWARDS A CRITICAL METHOD;" "CHRIST AND KRISHNA;" "THE PERVERSION OF SCOTLAND;" &C.

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PREFACE.

THE following papers, excepting the Epilogue, which condenses an unwritten lecture, were first prepared and delivered last winter as a course of lectures for the South Place Ethical Society, London, under the title "Modern Criticisms of Life." The title "Modern Humanists" is now substituted because of a strong representation made to me that "Criticism of Life" is an esoteric conception, which has not yet conquered the general intelligence, however wide be the literary vogue of the phrase. "Humanist" is, perhaps, not quite a popular conception either, but the significance of that term is less easily missed, and it properly covers the different lines of thought dealt with. At the same time, the original title determined the small amount of space given to the purely literary side of the work of the writers discussed.

To a certain extent some of the lectures have been extended, and all have been revised; but they substantially keep the lecture form, which, in respect of some past experience, I trust will be more conformable to the general reader's convenience than it has been to my own bookish prejudice. I have attempted to increase the value of the book so far as may be by adding a number of references and elucidations. This has been done more particularly in the section on Carlyle, for the reason that that section stands the greatest chance of exciting opposition, and so most needs to be backed by evidence and testimony. I have elsewhere contended that one of the greatest needs in literary criticism is the comparison and analysis of conflicting judgments, after the example set in the physical sciences; and this will hold good of criticism of characters and doctrines as well as of the discussion of æsthetic qualities. Despite attacks made on this view, I can only regret that want of leisure and consequent want of knowledge have hindered me from more fully annotating many points in these papers.

In the essay on Emerson, for instance, certain propositions are made as to the spontaneous nature of critical as of other ideas. Only since those pages went to press have I met with the *Théorie de l'Invention* of Professor Souriau (1881), which handles the whole problem with remarkable freshness and penetration. And here is a new instance of the need of more careful documentary record in mental and moral science: chancing to resume a former examination of the *Idéologie* of Destutt de Tracy, I find that he had to a large extent made the investigation independently taken up by M. Souriau. Needless to say, there are other writers to be cited in the same connection.

I have only to express, further, my sense of the inadequacy of the following studies all round, and of one or two in particular. In the essay on Emerson I now note an omission to dwell on valuable points in his teaching which I had formerly acknowledged. Lack of due leisure caused other oversights. But to remedy all would have been to make each section into a treatise; and I fancy I do better to keep nearly within those limits which, at least, secured an audience for the lectures.

June, 1891.

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MODERN HUMANISTS.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

I.

It is now over sixty-three years since the aged Goethe, in talk with the devout Eckermann, passed on Carlyle an encomium which has often been quoted. "Carlyle," he said, "is a moral force of great importance. There is in him much for the future, and we cannot foresee what he will produce and effect."[1] This notable praise, from the greatest modern man of letters, was bestowed when the subject of it was little over thirty years old, and had done only his "Life of Schiller" and a few translations and reviews to earn it. Heine and Mr. Swinburne combine to remind us that Jupiter's approving nods were bestowed with a somewhat Olympian caprice; and Carlyle himself must sometimes have grimaced at the fact that the eye which saw a great moral force in him saw a greater in Byron.[2] But, thirty years afterwards, a very different authority summed up Carlyle's achievement in terms of the forecast of Goethe. Of Harriet Martineau, though she did him a substantial service at a time when he confessedly needed it,[3] Carlyle never speaks in his letters or journals, after a first allusion, without some of his plentiful derision; but she is none the less one of his best advocates in the end. When she wrote her account of her life in the belief that it was near its close, she thus eulogised him: "If I am warranted in believing that the society I am bidding farewell to is a vast improvement upon that which I was born into, I am confident that the blessed change is attributable to Carlyle more than to any influence besides."[1] But she made some remarkable concessions, which raise a question that we shall have to face again in our survey. "He may be," she grants, "himself the most curious opposition to himself; he may be the greatest mannerist of his age while denouncing conventionalism—the greatest talker while eulogising silence—the most woeful complainer while glorifying fortitude—the most uncertain and stormy in mood while holding forth serenity as the greatest good within the reach of man; but he has none the less infused into the mind of the English nation sincerity, earnestness, healthfulness, and courage." Some of Harriet Martineau's judgments—for instance, that on Macaulay—fail to recommend themselves to posterity; but her eulogy of Carlyle, though he would have been the last to acknowledge the results she ascribed to his works, states a popular view; and, in any case, there are plenty of accomplished and influential men of letters who have in the main taken up her parable—Mr. Morley, Mr. Lowell, Dr. Garnett, Mr. Hutton, Professor Masson, Mr. Conway, and many more. Certainly, Carlyle was one of the leading figures in English life in his old age, and M. Taine, twenty years ago, remarked that he was the writer to whom average Englishmen referred a foreigner who asked for the leading English thinker.[2]

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[1] Eckermann's *Conversations*, Eng. tr., p. 277.

[2] Goethe said that a character of such eminence "as Byron had never existed before, and probably would never come again." *Id.*, p. 23.

[3] See Froude, *Carlyle's Life in London*, i., 97, 105.

This celebrity, as everybody knows, was built up by a long course of literary work certainly not planned to conciliate the British public, either in style or in doctrine; and while we must remember that in all ages it has been a popular thing to denounce the age, the fact of Carlyle's fame and standing is in itself significant. To estimate him aright, we have first to realise what kind

[1] *Autobiography*, i., 387.

[2] Herr Oswald, writing in 1882, notes that already the rising generation was turning away from Carlyle. *Thomas Carlyle: ein Lebensbild*, S. 3.

of a society it was into which he was born, and how he stood related to it. And, to begin with, without deciding how far Harriet Martineau was right in her explanation, we have to allow for an immense difference in moral culture between the age into which he came and ours. Perhaps the best side of the old *régime* is to be seen in Jane Austen's incomparable novels. We there contemplate a middle-class and upper-class society in which nobody has a suspicion that social reconstruction is a thing to be considered. Jane Austen's people, indeed, are impossible in this one point of their exclusion of all human problems from their minds at a time when England was in the first furious swing of the reaction against the French Revolution. But while we can see that they must have talked in cant formulas about the horrors of democracy, as they and she talked in cant formulas about the great issues of life and death, it remains clear that they did little more. The society of that age held the ethic of its classic novels, in which the problem of the hero was to get an income somehow without doing anything to earn it,[1] and that of the heroine to combine disinterested love with a good final settlement. Religion was a paralysing convention, which, when she touched it, reduced Jane Austen's own acute intelligence to torpor and inanity.[2] That good society could, or should be, anything but a fortuitous collection of people with easy incomes, nobody ever surmised: that society is, in truth, an organic though monstrous whole, in which the rich live on the labour of the poor, was a doctrine never even discussed, since mere political democracy was itself a horror of great darkness.

At the beginning of this century, it must be remembered, the average English intelligence was abnormally deadened and hidebound. Look to the matter of bookselling, and you will find that after the outbreak of the French Revolution, after the issue of Burke's "Reflections," there was an almost complete arrest among the middle and upper classes of the movement of rational and critical thought, which, rising a century before, had persisted through the corrupt Georgian period despite pietistic revival, and was taking new paths when Burke thought its progress had ceased.[1] For instance, Godwin's "Political Justice," Mary Wollstonecraft's "Rights of Women," and the English translation of the works of Voltaire, seem all to have stopped dead in the bookseller's hands, after starting with every sign of popularity. The editions cease in the last decade of the century. People were simply frightened back into orthodoxy, stupor, and respectability; and the nation turned in the mass to the brute excitement of war. What did survive was a new democratic politics and a new democratic Freethought, both kindled by the red-hot sincerity of Thomas Paine, and destined not to be trodden out again.[2] But all this remained tabu to upper class society, which in the mass touched a lower intellectual depth than it had reached for centuries. Compared with the respectability of the first quarter of this century, the previous century, which has been belittled by so many people, including Carlyle, is as a festival day compared with a British Sunday: it had curiosity, vigour, intelligence, lucidity, and, above all, wit; where the reigning tone and temper of the reactionary period—the tone of "good society," as apart from the obscure circles where new life germinated—was at once witless, joyless, and cowardly. What kind of thinking subsisted was, broadly speaking, the commonplace of Dr. Johnson, whom Carlyle would have us regard as a peculiarly vital human type, starved by the moral famine of the eighteenth century; and whom Professor Hales[3] now invites us to regard as really embodying the spirit of his time; but who is surely to be viewed as rather narrowing down to his own grasp the manifold thought of his age, excluding its originalities, and stamping on it the rigid impress of his own powerful character and prejudiced mind.

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[1] The vogue of this ideal in fiction is a measure of the socio-economic ethic of any period. Originally it was universal, either in the shape of the "prince" motive or in that of the young man who comes to fortune. We have it in our best fiction as late as Thackeray's "Philip," and it is still prevalent in the worse.

[2] See, for instance, her preparation for poetical justice on Mr. Elliot in *Persuasion,* by the revelation that in his youth he had done a good deal of Sunday travelling.

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[1] Compare the famous *Who now reads Bolingbroke?* with Mr. Morley's comment, *Voltaire*, 4th ed., p. 65.

[2] Paine's work was continued in the next generation by Richard Carlile, who suffered at the hands of the English Government the atrocious penalties of nine years' imprisonment.

[3] Introd. to Mrs. Napier's ed. of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, p. xxiii.

Of course, all generalisations of this kind must be taken with a free hold, and with constant readiness to recognise qualifications and exceptions. Needless to say, conventional religion ran off here and there into real piety or fanaticism; and, as I have said, new life and light were being obscurely developed. They present themselves (apart from that democratic Freethought which persisted in the towns among the people) in two guises, in the new poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Byron, and in the new politics of Bentham, James Mill, and the young Whigs, a politics which soon established itself on the economics that had been formulated by Adam Smith, though his book, like every other that called for mental effort, had to run the blockade of the reaction for twenty years.

In these two new factors, the new poetry and the new Radicalism, we have the leading external clues to Carlyle's position in his youth. The poetry and the Radicalism came into obvious contact in Shelley, and somewhat differently in Byron; and that fact is perhaps the plainest proof of the still rudimentary character of their common ideas. Poetry, dealing with public or general and not private or special themes, is either a mere artistic expression of the trite and the traditional, or a vague yearning towards a something new which is not clearly or rationally conceived. A cause well represented in poetry is either dead or as yet only an aspiration. Now, Shelley's poetry, in so far as it is political or humanitarian, is just such an aspiration; as Byron's is just a revolt against the traditional; and the fact that those two poets had the acceptance they had is the proof that their ideas, whether destructive or constructive, were not yet workable. To-day, when the ideas are matters of common strife and prosaic discussion, we find the poetry, as such, mostly bad—at least some of us do who set up to be critics; and if I am hooted for saying so I can but add that the conservative philosophical poetry of Wordsworth is rather worse than the innovating philosophical poetry of Shelley—his elaborate poems, that is, not the lyrics which came from his heart. They sought to make poetry of raw material which they were unable to fuse up to pure poetic quality—prejudices parading as wisdom, and theories not vitalised by human feeling. On the other hand, the prose-writing Radical politicians, we can easily enough see, had no complete scheme for men or States to live by, but only principles of amelioration, corrective of the tyrannies and iniquities re-established or confirmed by the reaction. Into this situation came the young Carlyle.

II.

First let us try to conceive him physiologically or temperamentally; for we may depend upon it that study or criticism of men, if it is ever to be scientific and profitable, must involve study of their physical characteristics, which determine the mental. It is now well enough known, through Mr. Froude's editorial labours and the no less untrammelled testimony of outsiders, that Carlyle came, on the father's side, of a vigorous and ill-tempered race. That is their record in Annandale, where plain speaking has not been peculiar to one family. The more comprehensively one surveys Carlyle's work, the more clearly one sees in him a marked hereditary strain which all his culture did nothing to deflect, but only embellished. He did not exaggerate, in his *Reminiscences*, the influence of his father over his mind, though, of course, he magnified the paternal intelligence.[1] He inherited James Carlyle's temper, his earnestness, his headlong spleen, his abusiveness, his everyday fashions of speech and phrase; but, unfortunately, *without* the important virtue he attributes to his father, that "*He never spoke of what was disagreeable and past.*"[2] That the son adopted his father's style of expression we know on his own testimony; and it is easy to see how many more of the paternal fashions he followed.[1] Much admiration seems to have been excited by the son's story of how the elder Carlyle passed judgment on a minister of his sect who, after officiating for some time in the district, decided to accept a "call" from another congregation where the salary was larger. "Pay him his wages," said old Carlyle, "and let the hireling go." Now, that minister was just doing what ten thousand other ministers have done before and since; nay more, what James Carlyle himself would do as a matter of course in his own masonwork; and what Thomas Carlyle thought himself perfectly entitled to do in his literary work, getting the best price he could for his services.[2] The old man simply voiced his own egoism in an explosion of unjust wrath, which the son unthinkingly endorsed. Take again the letter to his son in which James Carlyle makes some remarks on the doctrine of the resurrection, and tells, with a chuckle, how once he dealt with a neighbour who held by the view of the resurrection of the actual body buried. He told the poor man that such a "stinking clogg" as his body was very unfit to inhabit Paradise.[3] The old gentleman retails this insult in his letter to his son with obvious satisfaction; and we have no reason to doubt that his son in turn enjoyed the paternal humour.

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[1] *Reminiscences*, i. 7, 18, 19.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 9.

That letter of the elder Carlyle's is instructive in more ways than one. He himself, it is noteworthy, has no particular opinion as to what the resurrection would consist in. He quotes the views of his two disputing neighbours, and lets us see, not that he had reasoned out the subject for himself—though, of course, he was dogmatically certain that there was to be some resurrection—but simply that he had no liking or respect for the two disputants, and accordingly held himself in antagonism to both, but especially to the one least agreeable to him personally. There we have Carlyle all over. Antagonism, oppugnancy, negation, clearness of conviction only that other people are wrong—that is perhaps the most persistent note in his character; and we shall see, I think, that he did not greatly innovate on his father's range of ideas, much as he multiplied their utterance. The resentment of incompetence of all kinds, of bad workmanship in high things or in low, which is so often to be met with in Carlyle's pages, is just the kind of sentiment that he would oftenest hear in the household of a farmer-mason of powerful character, straitened circumstances, and sharp temper. Somewhat suggestive, too, of the frugal peasant heredity is the literary man's continual and querulous apprehension, through the first half of his life, of coming one day to starvation. His constant outcry on the subject, indeed, is not characteristic of the Scotch or any other peasantry, but is rather to be set down to his special turn for quarrelling with destiny; and even in his prosperous period he is found treating his wife with an inconsiderate parsimony which has shocked his warmest worshippers;[1] while he himself represents his father as generous in all his dealings. Still, these things may fairly be accounted for through ancestry.[2]

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[1] Mr. Froude, *London Life*, i. 40, says Carlyle often made the remark to him. Cf. Mr. Conway, *Thomas Carlyle*, p. 77, and Froude, *First Forty Years*, i. 397.

[2] "If they [*London Review*] pay me rightly they shall have a paper or two; if not, not." (Letter to John Carlyle in Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: the First Forty Years of His Life*, ii. 410.

[3] *Ib.*, i. 180.

So strong was the physical element in the inheritance that we may constantly see it in Carlyle's physical misery over his literary work. He had the physique of a bilious peasant, a physique whose strength was proved by its duration, but which, just because of its strength, would clearly have been much healthier at all times if only it could have had continuous physical exercise. He was quite right, in this regard, in saying that he was not naturally fitted to be a literary man;[3] and there was a spontaneous physical need behind his early thoughts of going to the American backwoods. A biological friend of mine, who preaches a universal return to handicrafts as the first necessity of social reform, argues that Carlyle's spleen was largely the expression of his inherited need for hand labour, a need inhering in muscle and nerve; and indeed the Carlylean gospel of work, which inconsistently enough makes labour a virtue in itself, irrespective of its direction, implies such a bias; though at times it is hardly possible to read Carlyle on that subject without thinking of Eccles, who "did not work much himself, but liked to see the young 'uns at it." Much has been said of the work he actually did, which impressed the unlaborious Emerson as tremendous; but in point of fact he idled as much as he worked; idled morosely, as he himself confesses, for years at a time, angrily out of gear for either study or production.[1]

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[1] See Mr. Larkin's *Thomas Carlyle: the Open Secret of his Life*, p. 325 ff.

[2] Contrast Mrs. Carlyle's avowal to her brother-in-law of her inability to be miserable about hypothetic future starvation. *London Life*, i. 65.

[3] "If I had been taught to *do* the simplest useful thing," he added, "I should have been a better and happier man." *London Life*, ii., 265-6. Mr. Froude says:—"Lord Jeffrey had judged rightly when he said that

He really had no prevailing bent to literature, regarded as a continuous development of thought, save in that he had a great hereditary flow of vivid speech in support of his few ideas; and, much as he has repeated himself, his thirty or forty volumes represent no overwhelming product for such a long life. And the physiological secret of all this seems to flash on one at the sight of the truest of all the portraits of him—the daguerreotype, an admirable etching from a photograph of which is prefixed to the Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence. The student of physiognomy, even if he be not specially familiar with Scotch types, can read there at a glance "the spasm of defiance contracting the nose," which Wagner saw in Beethoven, or rather an innate oppugnancy, written also in the harsh and indelicate mouth, with its dyspeptic downward fold. The later photographs, in comparison, are mere addenda, exhibiting as they do, one and all, on the confession of

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literature was not the employment best suited to a person of Carlyle's disposition." *Ib.*, p. 231.

[1] "For above two years I have been as good as totally idle, composedly lying *fallow*. It is frightful to think of!" Journal, Feb. 9, 1848 (*London Life*, i., 421). Cf. Journal, Feb. 7, 1835, *L.L.* i., 19, and again, i., 443; also *Reminiscences*, i., 59.

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his friends, an unreal air of "semi-professional melancholy,"[1] unmistakably—and not unnaturally—self-conscious.

III.

We have to figure this son of James Carlyle, then, started on the path leading to literature by force of the old Scotch tendency to turn an intellectual boy into a minister. In young Carlyle's case, this disposition would be encouraged by his seriousness of demeanour, in which again he took after his father. The father was stern and unkindly in the family, so that in early days all, including his wife, feared him;[2] and the child, we learn through his friend, Professor Masson,[3] was very much given to crying. In that household the child, the father of the man, and the man, the father of the child, present a luminous continuity.

Marked as is the heredity, however, both physical and moral, there arises on the intellectual side one important divergence. It is one of the strongest arguments for Carlyle's natural force of intelligence that, coming of the stock he did in the rural Scotland of the end of last century, he somehow thought his way out of religious orthodoxy. Of that process we have had no clear explanation, and I am fain to suggest that it was Carlyle's general alacrity of negative criticism, his innate need for opposing and objecting to what went on around him, that enabled him to put himself in opposition to orthodox clericalism so early as he did. Opinions apart, he was constitutionally unfit to be a pastor: he had no gift of general sympathy or communion; and clerical duties would have been impossible to him. He indicates in his Burns essay, and we know from his letters, that he was much impressed by Hume; but I cannot see that he ever really assimilated him; and Hume's cool, analytical method is quite alien to all that is characteristic and permanent in Carlyle.[1] We must remember that when he went to Edinburgh College, a boy of fourteen, the educated deism of the previous generation had been overwhelmed, as in England, by the reaction. Hume's ultimate atheism, brought out in his posthumous "Dialogues," had terrified most of the deists as it did his executor, Adam Smith; and there was certainly small audible scepticism in the Edinburgh of 1810. The boy seems so far to have shaped his own course. He knew nothing of the circles of lettered and cheerful society in which Scott, and Jeffrey, and Cockburn moved; and he lived through his five sessions, working over his Latin and his mathematics, reading miscellaneously in the college library, but remaining aloof alike from the pietistic and the bacchanalian sides of the old Edinburgh life, and developing chiefly what may be termed the dyspeptic principle, tempered in those early days, however, by some youthful friendships.

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[1] Professor Norton, in *New Princeton Review*, July, 1886, p. 2. "His face when quiet," says Professor Norton, "was rugged as that of a shepherd of the hills."

[2] *Reminiscences*, i., 13, 21, 44.

[3] *Cf. Sartor Resartus*, B. ii., Ch. 3.

We may safely decide that his intercourse with Edward Irving in his school-teaching period at Kirkcaldy did much to bring him in contact with the ideas of the day;[2] and throughout this period his social bias would still be mainly determined by the Radicalism of his father and mother[3]—a frame of mind which has prevailed among the Scottish peasantry more or less throughout their whole history, but notably since the Reformation. The story of his answer to the anti-Radical volunteer at Edinburgh on his way to drill—that he was not sure which side he should take[4]—points to the then state of his sympathies, though, characteristically enough, they led him to no sort of action. He was still far from having attained any consciously settled attitude towards life; but in his letters of this adolescent period we find him significantly emphatic in judgments which had often small foundation in knowledge; and, what is equally striking, passing quickly from an opinion to its opposite, with no apparent sense of shock, or sign of misgiving. Thus in a letter to his young friend Mitchell in October, 1814, he takes it for granted that his friend denounces with him the "bigoted scepticism of Hume"—"his specious sophisms," and "his blind prejudice in favour of infidelity;" and in May of the next year he writes to the same friend praising Hume very highly indeed, without apparently any reminiscence of what he had said eight months before.[1] The explanation seems to be that in the interim he had been reading Hume, which he had *not* done before. And at this time, after he has gone through his college course in physics, we have a sample of his later way of dealing with matters of science on which he had no proper information. He accuses a writer on Navigation of being absurd in stating that the attraction of a boat to a ship, or a ship to a rock, is a case of gravitation; and then he gives his own theory:—"A similar phenomenon may be witnessed by causing two pieces of wood to float on a bowl of water—and all men know that it is caused by capillary attraction."[2] I suppose his work in geometry was as competent as he and others have declared it to be; but it seems a good thing that he did not get the post of astronomer at Edinburgh, for not obtaining which he was so strangely rancorous towards Jeffrey.[3] Practical science was clearly not his forte.

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[1] "He sat through Thomas Brown's lectures with perpetual inward protest, declaring that he did not want the mind to be taken to pieces in that way.' Professor Minto, *Manual of English Prose Literature*, p. 163.

[2] *Reminiscences*, i., 103.

[3] As to his mother's strong Radical bent, see Carlyle's letter to her, *London Life*, i., 38. She is said to have taught him to admire Cromwell. *Daily News*, Feb. 7, 1881.

[4] *Reminiscences*, i., 153.

IV.

Whatever may have been his faculty for pure mathematics, his mind was soon drawn from that study towards the more perturbing issues of life. As he grew into manhood his sombre and splenetic temperament more and more asserted itself, as was perhaps physically natural in his position of schoolmaster. And whereas we have been asked both by Carlyle and his biographers to believe that at a certain time in early manhood he somehow vanquished his spiritual troubles and attained to some kind of philosophic serenity and self-mastery,[1] it is necessary to point out that no such thing ever really happened. The myth takes two forms. One connects with the passage in *Sartor Resartus*[2] in which Teufelsdröckh declares how there rushed upon him a feeling of indignant revulsion from his dyspeptic misery—a kind of experience which must have occurred to Carlyle a hundred times over, to no permanent purpose, as it has occurred to many another. The other view, also supported by Carlyle,[3] is that he was rescued from mental misery by his study of Goethe. There can be no doubt that his early resort to German literature, and to Goethe in particular, was a very important experience, and must have afforded him much intellectual solace. It is difficult for us to realise what it must have been then to pass from the reigning imaginative literature of England to the new literature of Germany. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Byron, were just beginning to create a new humanism in poetry; and already in Germany there existed a humanist literature which was in many respects deeper and in some respects truer than the new poetry in England. Starting as it did from the impulse of the highly developed literature of France, an impulse reinforced from England, the modern German literature had then, relatively to the time, just such a precocity of vigour and freshness [4] as belongs in our own time to the prose fiction of Russia, which in turn has sprung from the seed of all the developed literatures of Europe. Fresh as were Wordsworth and Byron in many ways, they were weighed upon by a great tradition that did not burden Schiller and Richter and Goethe; and even if it were not so, Carlyle was of all men the most likely to feel that attraction of novelty which we tend to find in ideas presented in a foreign language, and which we are so apt to miss in books in our own language by reason of prejudice.[1] A mind with such a tendency to oppugn all neighbouring doctrine was specially prepared to receive congenial thought from a foreign country against which he had not learned to harbour any prejudice. But if he had been as ready to receive Wordsworth and Shelley as he was to listen to Goethe, the German poet had clearly the richer and riper fruits for him. Goethe was for Carlyle what Wordsworth became for Mill, a harmoniser of life. Where the gentler nature of the young Mill found solace in the grave nature poetry of the man of peaceful rural existence, the stormy and spleenful Carlyle was dominated and charmed by the manifold life-criticism of "Faust," which is, as Emerson grumblingly contended,[2] the work of a man of the world, but a great man of the world, and a great poet into the bargain. For "grit" and "Geist," Goethe's masterpiece far outweighs the similarly ambitious poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley, excelling them in all the main qualities of virility, outspokenness, and volume of human experience.

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[1] *Early Letters*, edited by Prof. Norton, London, 1886, i., 20, 41.

[2] *Id.*, p. 72.

[3] *Reminiscences*, i., 56-9.

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[1] *Reminiscences,* i., 287. Froude, *First Forty Years,* i., 101. The passage in the *Reminiscences* is an amazing assertion, to which every page of his later life gives the lie.

[2] B. ii., ch. 7.

[3] *First Forty Years,* ii., 260; *Reminiscences,* i., 288; Crabb Robinson's Diary, iii., 2.

[4] Qualities which it has since entirely lost, as regards its fiction, drama, and poetry. Since Heine, German *belles lettres* have fallen very low indeed. Fiction, in particular, is much lower in Germany than music now is in England.

Carlyle then was for the time dominated by the new German literature, and in particular fascinated, and in a degree tranquillised, by the large serenity of Goethe. But nothing is more clear than his entire failure to assume Goethe's attitude towards life.[3] He no more assimilated Goethe's spirit than he did the transcendental philosophy, whether of Kant or of Fichte. And here it must be said that Carlyle's early utterances on these matters are imitative and pretentious to an afflictive degree. All his life long, certainly, his literary manner is uneasily self-conscious, nervously sarcastic, wanting equally in simplicity and in good temper, being never tranquil,[1] and only attaining *good*-humour in the form of humour, and not always in that form. But when he expounds Goethe's poetry,[2] or German metaphysics, we are clearly in the presence of a factitious enthusiasm. For metaphysics, despite a certain vein of elementary mysticism, he had no natural faculty, as he virtually admitted later by his avowed abandonment of all such study.[3] He could think penetratingly in that as in other provinces, in flashes, in disconnected perceptions; but for the strenuous and patiently minute analysis of ideas, which is the task of the true metaphysician, he had no turn. Read his early essay on Novalis, for the most part a worthless performance,[4] and you do not need his partial admission that he did not understand what he was so arrogantly writing about. His strength, his true bent, did not lie that way; and he was just doing what so many weaker young men have done—what, in fact, we have all done in our youth—putting on a priggish fashion of thought which was not cut to his measure. "The prig," it has been well said, "is the same in all times and in all countries, obeying not his own needs, but the needs of others which he believes ought to be his."[5] That is a measles which in the order of nature we ought to pass through in our youth; and nobody can accuse Carlyle of having had later attacks, though the dregs of his German seizure lingered a good while. "Priggishness," says the writer I have just quoted, "priggishness, the vice of imitation, is, in fact, the egg-shell which the sturdy bird can break, but in which the weak perishes." Carlyle was not of the perishing sort.

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[1] Cf. Goethe on Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*, *Werke*, *Aufg.* 1855, v., 577, cited by Oswald.

[2] *Letters and Social Aims*, ed. 1877, p. 59.

[3] Cf. Mr. Morley, *Miscellanies*, ed. 1886, i., 164.

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[1] Compare Sterling's criticism of *Sartor*, in Carlyle's *Life of Sterling*, Part ii., ch. 2.

[2] Cf. Dr. Garnett, *Life of Carlyle*, p. 31.

[3] See his complete repudiation of Kantism in the chapter on Coleridge in the *Life of Sterling*.

[4] Though it was approvingly patted by Schopenhauer. Wallace's *Life of S.*, p. 162. I do not understand Dr. Garnett's partial commendation (*Life*, p. 52).

[5] F. Lloyd and W. Newton, *Prussia's Representative Man* (a work on Kleist), p. 123.

V.

But this matter of Carlyle's quasi-transcendental philosophy requires further attention. We are told to this day, by writers of standing, that "The guiding principle of all Carlyle's ethical work is the principle of Fichte's speculation, that the world of experience is but the appearance or vesture of the divine idea or life: and that he alone has true life who is willing to resign his own personality in the service of humanity, and who strives incessantly to work out the ideal that gives nobility and grandeur to human effort."[1] Now, Fichte's philosophy, as here stated, is itself incomplete and inconsistent, since the very stipulation as to there being only one true life is a flat denial of the premiss that *all* life is the expression of the divine idea. But apart from that, Fichte undoubtedly was possessed in practice by his Pantheism, whereas Carlyle, however he may have followed Fichte in his youth, certainly never adjusted his "ethical work" to Fichte's main doctrine. The whole contention suggests how hard it is for transcendentalists in general, and for Carlyleans in particular, to relate their theories sincerely to life. Carlyle's practical doctrine, the doctrine of his "Past and Present," his "Latter-Day Pamphlets," his "Chartism," his "Friedrich," and his "Shooting Niagara," is the absolute negation of his early Fichtean idealism; and in his later work, save in irrelevant interjections, he does not even affect to repeat his idealistic formulas. If he thought he adhered to his early philosophy he was in this respect more profoundly inconsistent, more hopelessly divided against himself, than in any other, manifold as his inconsistencies were. If the universe be but the vesture of a conscious and purposive innate life, call it Spirit or Person, or what you will, what sense is there in all these volumes of Carlylean objurgation against the tendencies of things, all these lamentations and curses over the downward course of civilisation? Carlyle, we are told, was only using a metaphor when he bracketed or opposed God and Devil in discussing current conduct; but even as a metaphor his Devil is meaningless if he really held the Pantheism he professed. He was lampooning the Universe; shrieking against the stars in their courses; and insanely calling on mankind, whom he had called the mere garment of deity, passing phantasms of the eternal existence, to overrule that eternal existence itself. I will readily confess that I never met, either in life or in literature, a transcendental Theist, or, indeed, any Theist, who was plausibly consistent in applying his philosophy to practice; but if we are to regard Carlyle as throughout life a Transcendentalist, he is the most scandalous case of zealous inconsistency on record.[1] One is fain to surmise that his Transcendentalism was just one of the borrowed fashions of his youth, of which he felt the unfitness in his later life; and that he became just a straightforward irrational Theist of the traditional sort, making a God for every day of the year out of his impressions for the time being. In all his practical teachings his God is just the other side of his Devil, a thing to swear by. His admirers forgetfully insist that his faith in God was constant. If that were so, one could only answer that there is not the least logical difference between his Theism and his Diabolism, and that his Devil is as real to him as his God. It is not for me here to decide whether Carlyle in his heart of hearts had any genuine faith whatever. It would hardly be conclusive to take him finally by his despairing avowal in private that God seemed to leave the world to itself.[2] But I am bound to point out that there is nothing to be made out of his religion but the old alternatives of a good God temporarily baffled by a bad God, and an omnipotent God who never gets his own way, because of the obstinacy of the creatures he himself created. Every Theist capable of reasoning moves towards Pantheism if he wants at any price to avoid Atheism ; and Carlyle in many cases repudiates the old Deism and posits Pantheism ;[1] but all the same he plunges into the crassest Deism every time he seeks to connect God with human affairs by way of practical teaching on conduct. It takes a real thinker, as distinct from a man of literary genius, to be a consistent Pantheist. The consistent Pantheist, if such a one there be, knows that between him and the philosophical Agnostic or Atheist there is no difference save that of name : that the position of Spinoza, logically worked out, is just the position of Mr. Bradlaugh[2] or Mr. Spencer, stripped of certain irrelevancies of formula. But it was impossible for Carlyle at any time of his life to think or speak of Atheism without foaming at the mouth in a mere passion of prejudice. Holding steadily neither by Deism nor Pantheism, he can only be described as a fanatic either for a hallucination or for a name. Call his creed "Godism," and you limit the confusion of words by separately labelling his confusion of thought.[3]

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[1] Professor Adamson, cited and endorsed by Dr. Garnett, *Life of Carlyle*, p. 30.

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[1] "Mr. Carlyle is ostentatiously illogical, and defiantly inconsistent," says Mr. Morley (*Misc.*, i., 143). It is not clear that Mr. Morley felt this to be a vice.

[2] "I once said to him, not long before his death, that I could only believe in a God which (*sic*) *did* something. With a cry of pain, which I shall never forget, he said, 'He does nothing.'" Froude, *L. L.*, ii., 260.

VI.

Turn from the cosmological to the ethical side of his religion, and the confusion is, if possible, plainer. There is nothing in literature, outside theology, to compare with his self-contradictions on Right and Might. A dozen times over he assures us that rights count for nothing, that our business is to find our mights; and a dozen times more he arraigns an injustice as being a withholding from men of their clearest rights. The confusion is exquisitely confounded in one of his letters, and in a piece of his talk preserved for us by Professor Norton.[1] The sage, in his best and most entertaining manner, dilates to his disciple on "one ——,[2] a willow-pattern sort o' man, voluble but harmless, a pure herbivorous, nay, mere graminivorous creature, and he says wi' many terms o' compliment, that there's 'a great and venerable author,' meanin' myself, who's done infinite harm to the world by preachin' the gospel that Might makes Right; and he seems to have no idea that this is the very precise and absolute contrary to the truth I hold and have endeavoured to set forth, namely and simply, that *Right makes Might.* Well do I remember when in my younger days the force o' this truth dawned on me." Now, with all respect to Professor Norton's discipular piety, I am bound to say that a more frontless sophism was never framed by an accredited moralist. It is amazing that anybody should be duped by it. To say that *Right makes* (= implies) *Might* is not in the least to put the contrary of *Might makes* (= implies) *Right*: it is merely the verbal converse, and amounts to saying the very same thing over again; for if all Might is made by Right, and if Right always makes Might, then Might and Right are inseparable, and you cannot have Might without Right, which is exactly what is stated in the phrase *Might makes Right.* The real contrary to that phrase would just be, Might *does not* make Right; you may have Might without Right, or Right without Might. But this is what Carlyle expressly denied; and I repeat that in denying it he destroyed the basis of ethics. Of course, in practice he affirmed it nearly as often as he denied it;[3] but the fact remains that when he expressly grappled with the question his reasoning was either that of a sophist or that of a blunderer. And when Professor Norton goes on to say that it is only a "careless student" who could say Carlyle taught that Might made Right, and quotes in illustration the phrases in "Past and Present," that "in all battles, if you await the issue, each fighter has prospered according to his right," and that "in the long run and in the final issue, the just thing proves to be the strong thing,"—when the disciple reasons thus he forces us to answer that he is as confused as his master. The very passages he quotes are statements that Might is the measure of Right; and I for one must question the judgment of a "student" who cannot see as much.[1]

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[1] *E.g.*, the *Essay on Diderot* : People's ed., pp. 50-1.

[2] This was written while Mr. Bradlaugh was yet alive. I cannot now pass his name without a tribute to that power of analytic and penetrating thought in which he was no less remarkable than in his energy and sincerity of action.

[3] In his old age (Dec. 1869) he wrote in his Journal (*London Life*, ii., 394) :—"I wish I had strength to elucidate and write down intelligibly to my fellow-creatures what my outline of belief about God essentially is." A tolerably decisive admission that it was not easily to be found in his published works. After the usual fling at Atheism, he goes on : "I find lying deep in me withal some confused but ineradicable flicker of belief that there is a 'particular providence.'" Quite so.

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[1] *New Princeton Review,* July, 1886, p. 5.

[2] This was Mr. Lecky. See Carlyle's letter in the *London Life,* ii. 422. Yet Mr. Lecky was an attached friend. See p. 471.

[3] In the letter last cited he affirms that there never was a "son of Adam

The truth is, Carlyle has been celebrated by a band of literary admirers who have never logically analysed his teaching, and who are too often grown incompetent to do so by so long uncritically following such an inconsistent teacher.[2] It is impossible not to sympathise with their wish to restore the credit of an admired master after it has been suddenly shaken by the revelations, warrantable or unwarrantable, of his appointed biographer; but these revelations have in reality only added some private and domestic items to an indictment always framable from Carlyle's published works. We have here little or nothing to do with those revelations which have been exclaimed against, for they only give fresh instances of tendencies in Carlyle that are fully apparent in memorials of him which have not been objected to.

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more contemptuous of might except where it rests on right." He had his might days and his right days; this was a right day.

[1] Mr. Froude writes, in the letter cited: "To me, as I read him, he seems to say, on the contrary, that, as this universe is constructed, it is 'right' only that is strong." Is it a conspiracy of sophistry, or a consensus of confusion?

[2] "From first to last he was surrounded by people who allowed him his own way, because they felt his superiority—who found it a privilege to minister to him as they became more and more conscious of his greatness—who, when their eyes were open to his defects, were content to put up with them, as the mere accidents of a nervously sensitive organisation." Froude, *London Life*, ii., 233.

It is vain to say, as has been said,[1] that Professor Norton's corrections of Mr. Froude's editorial blunders amount to a general restoration of Carlyle to his old status—that is, to the position he held in the minds of many people who read his books without critically realising what they read. For my own part, I cannot heartily regret that the truth has been brought home to such readers by any revelations whatever. Rather I would point to the fact that Mr. Froude has been most bitterly blamed where he let out truth, least blamed for his carelessnesses, bad as they were, and hardly at all blamed for the worst vices of his book, which indeed are just a condensation of the vices of Carlyle-worship in general—a reckless perversion of ethical and all other criticism; a habitual substitution of bluster for reasoning; a total defect of social science; and an almost constant looseness of moral statement, as apart from statements of fact. Mr. Froude's occasional blame of his hero is only too well deserved. It is his windy panegyric and his empty reiteration that will one day mark out his book for general censure.[2] It is instructive to note how the eye which perceived some of Carlyle's worst domestic shortcomings can be blind to some of the plainest phases of his literary performance.

Mr. Froude has told us, for instance, that "To all men Carlyle preached the duty of 'consuming their own smoke,' and faithfully he fulfilled his own injunction. He wrote no 'Werthers Leiden,' no musical 'Childe Harold,' to relieve his own heart by inviting the world to weep with him. So far as the world was concerned, he bore his pains in silence, and only in his journal left any written record of them." [1] All which is patently untrue; and the loud assertion of it is one of a thousand proofs that Carlylism, among its devotees, makes for anything but accuracy. Carlyle not only filled his diary with his lamentations—a sufficiently futile proceeding in itself—but he filled his letters with them likewise; and not only did he write one book, *Sartor Resartus*, primarily to relieve his own heart by inviting the world to weep—or laugh, or sigh—with him, but he resorted to the same inexpensive relief in every book he wrote, in season and out of it. Burn his own smoke he never did, while he could hold a pen. The smoke of him goeth up from forty chimneys, the volumes of his works. "At home, however," says the conscientious biographer, "he could not always be reticent." For "could not always," read "could never," and you have the general truth; because any "reticence" Carlyle ever accomplished was plainly as gloomy as his speech, and deserves to be called by no such commendatory name. Take any general virtue which he has lauded—serenity, self-suppression, obedience, silence, rigid devotion to truth and justice—and you have but to read in his life and books to see him woefully lapse from it. He exhibits not merely human frailty, failure to realise his ideals: his ideals themselves are internecine. With his spontaneous oppugnancy, his revolt from calm science, his incapacity for analysis, he had come into a world where above all things these qualities were wanted in those who would be guides. Sound guidance, therefore, he could not give.

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[1] By Mr. Leslie Stephen, in a speech in the States. *Academy*, July 19, 1890, p. 50.

[2] See, at the outset of the *London Life*, the comparison of Carlyle's faults to "vapours on a mountain," and the figure about the "sparks" from the fire in his soul which burnt red to the end, and which "fell hot on those about him . . . not always hitting the right spot or the right person; but it was *pure fire notwithstanding*, fire of genuine and noble passion, of genuine love for all that was good, and genuine indignation at what was mean or base or contemptible" (i., 6). To such fustian may a man be brought by a habit of claptrap.

VII.

All this, it will be said, is making out Carlyle to be a teacher without grasp even of his own teaching, a life-long preacher of contradictions, a prophet with a gospel of shreds and patches. Well, that is, roughly put, what I am undertaking to show. I conceive Carlyle, to put the matter concisely, as a man of extraordinarily vivid imagination, who saw and felt separate pictures, scenes, situations, ideas, sentiments, convictions, with an unparalleled intensity, and was able to find burning words in abundance to express that; but who was fundamentally incapable of a connected philosophy of life, as he was incapable of writing a book of any kind otherwise than as a series of separate pictures, or repetitions of a protest in different figures. His vividness and his disconnectedness would appear to be correlative. He detested philosophical histories because they offered continuous reasoning, where he needed a series of emotional states; and his bent was for him always the measure of fitness. These things are at bottom matters of physique; and when the doctors begin, after generations of unreasoning aversion, to take up the science of localised brain functions, as they are at length doing with the phenomena of what they have called hypnotism, they may explain such qualities in terms of cerebral constitution. However that may be, Carlyle's thinking is plainly a series of impulses and impressions, often of course coinciding with or corroborating each other; but never subjected to a continuous self-criticism with the view of eliminating error by the test of consistency, which is the ultimate test of truth. And to say this is the same thing as saying that Carlyle was inveterately prejudiced. Prejudice, remember—the preference of our habit to another's, tempered more or less by susceptibility to particular magnetisms—is the primary or natural state of every one of us; and the only difference between man and man in this regard is that some try more or less hard to reduce their ideas to consistency, while others more or less completely abstain from the attempt. Carlyle's abstinence seems to have been well-nigh total—seems, that is, from his published work, though he was probably too sensitive a man not to check himself oftener than he lets us see.

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[1] *London Life*, i., 73.

Take any one of his familiar doctrines as we have taken his Godism and his theory of Might and Right, and this infirmity will appear. As he grew in years he passed out of his vague early Radicalism, which seems to have been irrational enough,[1] into a kind of Radical Toryism, which called for Radical reform in the people's interests at the hands of a good despot, whom apparently the people were to choose, though in the terms of the case they were incapable of wise choice. And when he once gets the length of bringing his see-saw doctrine of kingship to the neighbourhood of practice, what does he propose? That the matter should be settled in Britain by the reigning sovereign—who is the extremest possible negation of Carlyle's ideal sovereign, and therefore most completely disentitled to play the part—undertaking to choose subordinates or sub-kings, who, thus chosen by typified incompetence, should competently do the kingly work.[1] The scheme, coming after all that pother and pretence, is worse than absurd; it is despicable. You feel that after all the prophet had not the courage of his opinions. And it is the same with his treatment of religion. He abandoned the reigning faith: he often raged at it in private, and to some extent indirectly impugned it in his writings; but when it came to speaking out plainly and fully he recoiled. His biographer tells us that he would not attempt to dethrone the moribund Christianity which exasperated him, because he feared to open a way for an Atheism which he believed to be worse.[2] He blustered privately of an "Exodus from Houndsditch," but never spoke publicly a plain word to such effect. On his own principles, that was an unpardonable treason. He was avowedly afraid to speak the truth lest it should lead to evil;[3] and all the while he professed to teach that only the speaking of the truth and nothing but the truth could save society from ruin. It is intelligible that out of filial concern he should dissemble with his pious old mother; but he dissembled with the very world whose insincerity he was always denouncing. His whole manner of expression on religion, barring a few explosions,[4] is designed to suggest orthodoxy; and he did nothing to resist the bigotry and superstition which he privately railed against. He could impeach where impeachment brought him rather respect than odium : he never risked in his own person the impeachment of heresy.[1] Other derelictions in abundance are confessed by one or other of his admirers all round, as we saw at the outset they were by Harriet Martineau. With his gospel of silence, as she said, he was the most irrepressible of talkers ; and his talk, brilliant and endlessly entertaining as it was, yet was emphatically that of a man who was not seeking for truth, who would listen to no other man's truth, who had no real thought even of persuasion, but who was only concerned to blow off his own steam. And it was the same in his writing. The man who preaches silence turns out to be one of the most loquacious of writers, inasmuch as his didactic books say the same thing over and over again in fresh words, and, as there is no demonstration or logic, but only asseveration, the purport of a volume at times might easily be put in a chapter. So with his denunciations of other teachers for what he held to be their shortcomings. He blamed Voltaire, unreasonably and unjustly enough, for merely denying and destroying ; and nine-tenths of his own life's work, apart from his mere story-telling, is just negation and destruction, or rather, vain attempts at destruction, for he had not Voltaire's gift of doing what he aimed at. His energy almost always proceeds from some repulsion ; he never in his life, from the time of Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws,[2] seems to have given his approbation to any man's scheme of action for the public good, even where it simply removed an obstruction ; and it is memorable that the one contemporary writer whom latterly he cordially applauded, Mr. Ruskin, pleased him precisely by his denunciations, and never by his constructive views.[1] If anybody went to Carlyle sincerely desirous of practical guidance, the chances were that he simply fed the sage's sense of the humorous, which went deeper than even his books show. Mr. Henry James, the elder,[2] has told how Lord John Manners, the nobleman who is like to be made immortal by one couplet, went to Carlyle with some other aristocrats of the young England school to ask counsel. Carlyle told the story to Mr. James as a capital piece of fun.

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[1] *First Forty Years*, ii., 136.

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[1] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, iii. and vi.

[2] *London Life*, i., 264, 425-6.

[3] "He really thinks the truth dangerous. Poor wretch. . . ." *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, iv., People's ed., p. 136. And see his own first attitude towards Mr. Froude, *London Life*, i., 458.

[4] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, p. 137; and see Mr. Conway, as cited, p. 77.

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[1] So far as his explicit teaching goes, he has left Scotland as it was. "The thorn in his heart, which the solitudes of Scotland could not remove, was his utter inability to bring his intellect into any harmony with the faith and ideas of the people. . . . Again and again he went back there, but, as Mrs. Carlyle told me, the majority of them were so narrow and dogmatic that Carlyle hardly drew a peaceful breath till he got back to Chelsea" (Conway, as cited, p. 150). Yet he never sought to enlighten the bigots. Compare Professor Minto, *Manual*, p. 167.

[2] See his letter to Peel in the *London Life*, i., 376-7. Its inflated rhetoric and its self-consciousness contrast strikingly with Peel's simple and sufficient reply.

> "'They asked me,' he said, 'with countenances of much interrogation, what it was just that I would have them to do. I told them that I had no manner of counsel to bestow upon them; that I didn't know how they lived at all up there in their grand houses, nor what manner of tools they had to work with. All I knew was, I told them, that they must be doing something ere long, or they would find themselves on the broad road to the devil.' And he laughed as if he would rend the roof."[3]

That was typical. The constant habit of aversion and mockery made him ultimately a mere mocker at all other men's hopes.[4]

Half the criticism in the world, no doubt, is simply the expression of that instinctive opposition of types and species which is variously visible throughout organic nature; but no writer of distinction was ever so signally a mouthpiece of his neurotic repulsions as Carlyle. In his prime we find him, out of sheer spleen, barking at Seneca for his reiteration of platitude about virtue, which was the exact counterpart of his own life-long habit.[5] In middle age, attained by him with hardly a taste of the discipline he was always prescribing for others, he snaps rabidly at all "isms" alike, and avows affinity with none. In his old age, save for his endorsement of his disciples' strictures, he has no relation whatever to the general life. The later portraits, with their "semi-professional melancholy," are thus a kind of acceptance of the destiny of frustration that is stamped upon the racked and reposeless features of the man with his work yet to do.

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[1] Last letter to Emerson, in their *Correspondence*, ii., 352.

[2] Dr. Garnett's disparagement notwithstanding, this writer's *Recollections of Thomas Carlyle* make by far the most illuminating of the magazine papers on the subject. It is as good in its way as anything Carlyle ever did in his.

[3] *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1881, p. 597. Compare Dean Stanley's reminiscence in his funeral sermon, cited by Oswald, S. 4.

[4] "I think," says Mr. James again, "he felt a helpless dread and distrust of you instantly that he found you had any positive hope in God or practical love to man" (p. 594). "Nothing maddened him so much as to be mistaken for a reformer. . . ." (p. 603).

[5] "Oh, the everlasting clatter about virtue! virtue! In the devil's name be virtuous and no more about it."—(*Journal*, 1832, in *First Forty Years*, ii., 309.)

VIII.

But some part of all this, we saw, was apparent to Harriet Martineau long ago; and yet she claimed for Carlyle a great achievement in the stirring up of the English mind to better courses. Can the claim be just? Can the man whose teaching was a tissue of contradictions, whose philosophy was a fallacy, have influenced a whole generation for good? We should be glad to believe so if we can; and there is, after all, an aspect of Carlyle's work of which the claim holds true. I have said that his most constant inspiration was repulsion, aversion alike to what men did around him and to what others proposed by way of improvement. Unquestionably, if his oppugnancy became an obsession, it had still abundant scope for healthy exercise on the social conditions of his and our time. Negative criticism, so called, is just as valuable as any other intellectual work when it is rightly done—a truth which Carlyle would not see when, in a purely negative spirit, he sought to discredit Voltaire. If a thing be bad, a condition evil, a doctrine false, the saying so is clearly the first service that the case admits of. It is folly to make out that it is better work to build the new house than to clear away the rotten one. Now, in that England which resulted from the great reaction we glanced at; the England in which the one important reform for which men could by long effort be got to unite in sufficient numbers was Free Trade; the England in which, with a rapidly spreading industry and a rapidly multiplying population, men thought that moral and intellectual interests could take care of themselves, and that civilisation was sure to prosper all round under a reign of blind industrial competition—in that England Carlyle must have counted for something as mere thunder and lightning to clear the air. Things were not going right but wrong, in a hundred directions; and if his estimate of what was right and what wrong was often crude and capricious, his challenge at least must have set many thinking who otherwise would not have thought. To this conclusion comes Mr. Lowell, after being forced like so many others to give up Carlyle's ethics; to pronounce him a blind partisan of unscrupulous power; to protest, as so many have protested, that his polemic against cant was itself in the end the merest cant.[1] The moral stimulus, the spur to action and to thought, the vehement arraignment of social anarchy and hypocrisy, these remain to claim credit from a just criticism. That he did so much for England as Harriet Martineau thought, as the dying John Sterling thought, it is hard to believe. But where is the means of measuring such influences? We can but decide in general terms that he was, as Goethe predicted he would become, a moral force of great importance, in so far as his batteries were rightly directed; leaving open, however, the unpleasing probability that where they were wrongly directed he must also have been a great moral force for harm. The best way, for him, of putting the case, is to dwell on the energy with which he challenged what he felt to be ruinous tendencies in the society in which he lived. It is one of his "chief and just glories," says Mr. Morley,[2] that he never was blind, as so many were, to the fact that modern England was entering on a new and great crisis.

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[1] So, too, Mr. James, as cited. And see Carlyle's letter to his wife in 1835 (*London Life*, i., 59):—"One thing in the middle of this chaos I can more and more determine to adhere to—it is now almost my sole rule of life—to clear myself of cants and formulas as of poisonous Nessus shirts; to strip them off me, by what name soever called, and follow, were it down to Hades, what I myself know and see." And then, in the very next breath, a canting formula :—"Pray God only that sight be given me, and freedom of eyes to see with."

[2] *Miscellanies*, i., 137.

Glory? Can it then be a glory merely to have seen what so many saw and felt, apart from any rightness of counsel as to how the crisis should be faced? Well, his glory let it be. To many he was the first bringer of the message that social morality does not end with the discharge of money obligations; that a system of self-preservation in terms of commerce is only savagery over again. While others, seeing as much, cautiously planned lines of transformation, he flatly impeached the actors, roundly calling the fortune-making employer of labour a Chactaw, long before it was the fashion to speak of exploitation.

That is, I think, his high-water mark; and after all it was not toilsomely attained. It was not hard to denounce Government for industrial distress, as he did in "Chartism." Temper fired his nerves and made sharp his tongue; and he sometimes censured with the spontaneous insight of an angry woman. Beyond that, he counts for little in social reform. The matter is summed up once for all by Professor Minto, the most judicial of his critics:—

> "Carlyle's doctrines are the first suggestions of an earnest man, adhered to with unreasoning tenacity. As a rule, with no exception that is worth naming, they take account mainly of one side of a case. He was too impatient of difficulties, and had too little respect for the wisdom and experience of others, to submit to be corrected; opposition rather confirmed him in his own opinion. Most of his practical suggestions had already been tried and found wanting, or had been made before and judged impracticable upon grounds that he did not or would not understand. His modes of dealing with pauperism and crime were in full operation under the despotisms of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. His theory of a hero-king, which means in practice an accidentally good and able man in a series of indifferent or bad despots, has been more frequently tried than any other political system: Asia at this moment contains no government that is not despotic. His views in other departments of knowledge also are chiefly determined by the strength of unreasoning impulses." [1]

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[1] *Manual of English Prose Literature*, pp. 162-3. Compare the criticism of Professor Masson, the more weighty as coming from an admirer (*Carlyle*, pp. 106-114):—"His impatience of reasoned political science in any form . . . really shuts him out, more than he was himself aware, from that intimacy with the 'fact of things,' which he defined so energetically as the . . . sole attainable wisdom" (p. 113). See also Mr Morley, *Misc.*, i., 153-6.

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Against this the claim that Carlyle urged national education is of little weight. It was part of the Radicalism of his age, and after he dropped Radicalism he in no effective way advocated it. In fine, we must reckon him as a general force or stimulus, an awakener and censor, not as a teacher, though he figured as a teacher to those he stimulated.

IX.

The secret of Carlyle's influence clearly lies in his diction, considered apart from his doctrines. Ideas which, put forward in a simple and unexcited prose, would have impressed nobody as remarkable, become in his pages as the sounds of trumpets, and move men to enthusiastic acceptance—when they do not drive them to put their fingers in their ears. And to-day, after such an infinity of protests from friends and foes against the uncouthness of the Carlylean style, it is interesting to find that the books have quite an immense circulation among the widening multitude of general readers. From a literary point of view there is nothing to regret in that, even on the side of taste in style; for there is more literary danger in that petulant and senile conservatism which resents all novelty of expression, than in any mesmeric influence of a striking mannerism; and the time is past for an extensive contagion of Carlyle's. He, indeed, spoiled one or two men's style—Forster's and Professor Masson's, for instance, and perhaps in part that of Dickens; but English prose has developed far too much in the last thirty years to permit of Carlyle's work becoming a model. Before that period he certainly gave literary English new resonance and colour,[1] or, at least, restored some that it had lost; but subtler and more various art than his has taken away from him the prestige of freshness which did so much for him down to 1860 or so. What seems to be going on now is a wide popular trial of the savours which tickled the more receptive palates among the cultured class of last generation. And this new popularity, it is plain, is one more proof that Carlyle is not really a profound thinker, as men used to call him, but essentially a writer on the popular plane of ideas. In *Sartor Resartus* he puzzles just by affecting to be abstruse when his thought is perfectly simple. Like Mr. Browning, he made many people fancy he was profound by being, for them, in part unintelligible; but in the one case as in the other, a little patience, a little literary gymnastic in construing, serves to show that what seemed unheard-of doctrine was only old thought in new dialect.[1]

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[1] See some good observations on Carlyle's style in Mr. R. H Hutton's essay on him.

Among his new public as among the old, Carlyle will doubtless impress and fascinate by his unflagging vehemence; for vehemence, remember—mere physical excitation, communicated through words, or sounds, or gestures—goes a long way towards setting up a hysterical plasticity in the average person. It did so in all the ancient religions, eastern or western; and it does so in modern life, alike savage and civilised, in negro religion in Africa and the United States, in Salvation Army practice, and in the popular preaching of all ages. Carlyle, we know from himself, never could write save in a white heat of nervous excitement; and, whether or not there be truth in the Horatian maxim that the poet himself should weep if he would make others weep, it is certain that the excited writer always stands a good chance of exciting some at least of his readers.

What is more, Carlyle's books profit now, as they profited before, by that mysterious and apparently immortal passion that in this country attracts people to sermons.[2] It is something uniquely British. All foreigners are struck by it, putting it down as a national characteristic, with roast-beef and hypocrisy; and they seem to despair of explaining it, save by vaguely connecting it sometimes with the hypocrisy, and sometimes with the roast-beef. "In England," says one Frenchman, "the preacher is everywhere, even in the novels;" and M. Taine points out how the first really English art was that of Hogarth, a succession of moral exhortations. That taste has stuck to the nation now for two hundred and fifty years, and will not soon leave it; hence, among other causes, a long lease of popularity for Carlyle. For a large part of his work is in the very key and spirit of the sermon—a solemn vein of allusion to such facts as death and eternity, and the need for doing our duty, facts on which there is nothing new to be said, but on which the true sermon-lover really does not want anything new, being quite content to hear the established commonplaces once a week till death do them part. Carlyle had a great faculty for ministering to that strange appetite, being wont, as Emerson wrote of him in his diary, to say the same thing day after day, and year after year, throughout his life.[1] It comes out queerly enough in his correspondence with his brother John, which evidently reflects the style of conversation in the family circle—a style familiar enough to those who know the Scotch peasantry. It is made up to an enormous extent of the tritest commonplaces of the primeval and perennial sermon, retailed with a serious gusto impossible to describe. The letters of the Carlyle brothers, we can see, consisted largely in a grave process of swopping platitudes, and comforting each other under the trials of life with proverbs. The older and staler they are, the better Carlyle seems to relish them:—"Another year has gone." "What a world it is." "What a world we live in." "We are in God's hand." "Let us hope . . . Our life is a hope." And so on. And Thomas is quite grateful when John sends him a comparatively fresh platitude from Germany: "Beautiful is that of brave old Voss," about the earth holding on her journey in all weathers. "Good also is this that you give me: *Lass es um Dich Wettern*"—("Let it weather round you.") "I really try to do so, and succeed." Alas for the success!

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[1] Jeffrey was not far wide of the mark when, in 1828, he wrote to Carlyle:—"I suppose that you will treat me as something worse than an ass when I say that I am firmly persuaded the great source of your extravagance, and of all that makes your writings intolerable to many and ridiculous to not a few, is not so much any real peculiarity of opinions as an unlucky ambition to appear more original than you are." (*First Forty Years*, ii., 38.)

[2] "Mr. Carlyle won his first successes as a kind of preacher in print." Lowell, *My Study Windows*, 6th ed., p. 107.

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[1] *Correspondence*, ii., 148.

Imagine this kind of reflection reiterated and amplified by all the resources of a sonorous and impressive style,[1] with God's name taken in vain or otherwise without stint, and the whole embellished with eloquent imagery and solemn allusions to spiritual experience, and you have the essentials of success for a popular serious writer. It may be doubted whether the fecundity of grave commonplace in Carlyle's essays would to-day be tolerated in the reviews: indeed, it is pretty certain it would not be. When we read the pages of tritely sententious reflexion with which he interlards his critiques we have to remember what poor stuff the English magazine writing of sixty years ago generally was, if we are not to vote the writer a literary empiric.

X.

But this very wealth of platitude, in Carlyle's case, is correlative with the greater qualities of all his work, its habitual earnestness and intensity. These simple thoughts, such as they are, are genuine with him; they are his natural state of mind, save in so far as in his early days he seeks to give them a cast of German profundity; and a platitude for him, as it would be for his parents, is not what it is to readers bored with its repetition. Platitudes after all lie close to the great facts of life, and if only they did not get rubbed thread-bare they would be weighty things. His reflexion is the serious expression of what is in his heart, and the single-mindedness which gives it words is the secret of that forcible grip upon his subject which made his early essays stand out for many readers—and may make them stand out even now—from the ordinary run of reviewing, marked as it so often is by perfunctoriness and a concern to be at best elegantly entertaining. Such essays as those on Scott, Burns, Johnson, and Voltaire, owe their general impressiveness to the fervour with which, in writing them, the reviewer insists on bringing his subject into touch with his deepest convictions. He is not so much judging as feeling and protesting his feeling: indeed, the scientifically judicial attitude, though he every now and then strives hard to assume it, and even succeeds beyond the wont of his contemporaries, is strictly foreign to him, though his literary taste is masculine and penetrating. In these characteristics lie his strength and his weakness. His criticism of Burns, for instance, in so far as it is literary, is for the most part just and durable, and is to a large extent in remarkable opposition to that indiscriminate and incompetent laudation of Burns by the mass of his countrymen, which consists so ill with the national reputation for criticism. But these criticisms, good as they are, are touched in lightly, without any process of analysis or attempt to convince; and the stress of the essay runs to the contemplation of Burns's relations to life and society, on which Carlyle felt most strongly. Now, it was his foible, as we have already seen, to be spontaneously in opposition, and in sarcastic opposition, to most views that came to him from the outside; and the result is that his verdict on what was for him the main aspect of the case is a series of contradictions. Many sensible people had felt that Burns's poetry suffered, not only from the hasty character of his culture, but from the laborious preoccupations of his life, although his splendid vitality enabled him to perform wonderful feats of composition. The truth of this is so obvious that Carlyle could not help stating it. But inasmuch as it had been stated by other people he must needs, in another portion of his essay, contradict them, and insist with futile mysticism that poetry lies in the heart and not in the tongue. So with the question as to Burns's character. Carlyle, resenting the prosperity of smug respectability all around, while a Burns is allowed to stumble down the road to ruin, makes the natural protest; but soon the feeling swings the other way, and he decides that Burns ought to have saved himself, and that society is not to blame. And then finally there is again the reaction against the smug respectable and their censure, and we are reminded that in blaming a man for his weaknesses we are to consider his temptations—this after the critic has done his blaming. In every one of these views there is a measure of truth; but the critic makes no attempt, and we cannot but conclude that he lacked the faculty, to reconcile them and give us the net truth in a clarified form. Criticism, like history—here I differ from Mr. Lowell—was for him a matter of detached and disconnected views;[1] and most of his essays remain collocations of different pieces, written each at one jet, and never reduced to unity.

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[1] Emerson, at a late stage of his acquaintance with Carlyle, wrote in his diary:—"In Carlyle as in Byron, one is more struck with the rhetoric than with the matter. He has manly superiority rather than intellectuality, and so makes good hard hits all the time. There is more character than intellect in every sentence, herein strongly resembling Samuel Johnson." *Corr.*, ii., 149; Cf. James, *Atlantic Monthly*, as cited, p. 593.

The natural result of this is that the essay on Burns, above instanced, has not guided critical judgment among Scotchmen, though they have all read it. His moral criticisms make them feel warmly but vaguely and contradictorily on the subject; and, thus swaying their hearts without enlightening their heads, he has never brought them round in the mass to his view of Burns on the literary side, though he has encouraged many of them to applaud parts of Burns' ablest work at which Scotch respectability holds up its black-gloved hands. Equally instructive is the essay on Scott, and its measure of acceptance. Here most conspicuously Carlyle played the moralist, full of the sense of the gravity of life and conduct, and so much concerned to insist on it that he tried Scott by his life, by his attitude towards the universe, rather than by his performance as an artist. Nothing could be more unjust, when we consider Carlyle's treatment of Goethe and Shakspere. He is full to overflowing of reprobation of Scott's worldliness, his ambition to found a family and a castle, his subordination of his literary work to these ends. Certainly these are not the loftiest ambitions; but what of Goethe's official life at Weimar, and of Shakspere's canny accumulation of a competence, and cessation from play-writing when he had got it? Carlyle was really writing in the spirit of John Knox, in solemn protest against the vanity of spending a life in writing poems and novels

[1] Cf. Professor Minto, *Manual*, p. 169.

merely to entertain the public. Neither Shakspere nor Goethe would have countenanced him for a moment in such a protest;[1] they knew the fascination of pure art, and could enjoy it in a natural and healthy way for its own sake; and, granted that each of them dug much more deeply into life than Scott, they would to a large extent have come under Carlyle's ban if he had been minded to apply it impartially. The criticism of Scott, in fine, though redeemed by concessions which a man of Carlyle's capacity could not but make, is essentially unjudicial and unscientific; and this again because he cannot correct his impressions by any comprehensive principles. An admirer of his has recently, in an able and independent essay,[2] decided that Carlyle is a bad guide when he plays the iconoclast; that his best inspiration lies in his power of sympathy; and that without that he is but a "blinded Polyphemus, groping round his cave, bent on murder." The figure is happy, but treacherously suggestive. I, for my part, cannot admit that the one-eyed giant sees perfectly when he has his eye to use. True vision is binocular. Sympathy is only one guide towards truth; it will track it where antipathy will not; but sympathy without science is no criterion; and where Carlyle sympathises he can be as unjudicial in one direction as antipathy can make him in another. When he would praise, he magnifies ordinary qualities into peculiar virtues, as Napoleon's objection to being cheated by his upholsterers. His contrasted treatments of Mirabeau and Marat are the repudiation of critical justice. In his early lectures on "Revolutions of Modern Europe," he forced a friendly critic to remark on his easy tolerance in Cromwell of the lying which he found unpardonable in Charles.[3] Of Johnson, whom he admires, he presents to us only one half; presenting it powerfully and affectingly, but inevitably with exaggeration, because for him the half is the whole. So, in his early papers on Goethe, there is no real criticism because there is no ripeness of reflection, but only determined apostleship; as, on the other hand, in the essays on Voltaire and Diderot, the effort to do justice to writers whom British orthodoxy ostracised—an effort which was not quite a self-denying one for Carlyle—is every now and then pretermitted in the interests of his prejudices,[1] and his disposition to kick at the philosophy of the Frenchman as at that of his neighbours. His dismissal of Voltaire's criticism of Christianity, on the face of it, is deeply disingenuous, and can only be palliated by remembering where and when he wrote. Voltaire's scepticism, he said, struck only at the dogma of plenary inspiration; yield him that, and his battering ram played idly through space. Considering that what Voltaire attacked was the rooted belief of the whole of Christendom, this was an outrageous evasion. In the essay on Diderot, again, with much fair appreciation, there is some strangely unsympathetic writing, as on the betrayal of the great editor by his publishers; and much blatant injustice *à propos* of Diderot's atheism. At the mere sound of that word, the Godite always became rabid. For the rest, some of the more purely literary of the essays, as those on German Playwrights and the Nibelungen Lied, are fresh and entertaining, if sometimes un-catholic, his literary sense here having fairly free play. But in the criticisms of leading and typical men and teachers the strong and the weak points are always the same—the incoherent prepossessions and oppositions always preclude unity, and still the temperamental glow of earnestness always keeps the reader's attention, even in a platitude.

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[1] Carlyle, it should be noted, freely admitted that he wrote the article on Scott against the grain. *London Life*, i., 120; Letter to Emerson, *Corr.*, i., 143.

[2] In the magazine *Igdrasil*, September, 1890.

[3] See Mr. Shepherd's *Life*, i., 204, citing the *Examiner*.

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[1] Mr. Morley (*Misc.*, i., 185) praises Carlyle for that, much as he wrote on many men, "there is hardly one of these judgments, however much we may dissent from it, which we could fairly put a finger upon as indecently absurd or futile. Of how many writers of thirty volumes," asks Mr. Morley, "can we say the same?" This is a singular eulogy. Are "indecently absurd or futile" judgments so common in celebrated writers—in Swift, Voltaire, Hallam, Goethe, Sainte-Beuve, Guizot, Herder, Lessing, Macaulay? Do we call even Johnson's worst criticism of Milton, or Voltaire's of Shakspere, indecently absurd? It is not difficult to make up a list of very outrageous criticisms from Carlyle's works; and in the biographical matter published since Mr. Morley wrote there are contained some that are indeed indecently absurd—*e.g.*, those on Lamb (*Reminiscences*, ii., 165); Froude, (*First Forty Years*, ii., 209-210); Comte (*Rem.*, i., 338); Mill (*London Life*, ii., 420); Keats (*Ib.*, i., 450). Add to these the criticisms in his works on Grillparzer, Scott, Keats, and Shelley; and Mr. Morley's eulogy is seen to need modification.

XI.

It has been a good deal the fashion of late years to compare Carlyle with Macaulay to the disadvantange of the latter.[1] I am no devoted partisan of his, but I am bound to say that the balances do not seem to me to be as a rule fairly held. I have striven to show that while Carlyle talks much about the deeper problems of life, he has little that is new or instructive to say about them; while in other directions his ideas are few and simple. Now, Macaulay scrupulously shuns those themes on which Carlyle's mind dwelt most, and so he strikes people as lacking profundity; while in point of fact he simply avoided uttering thoughts which he either knew to be trite, or felt to lack clearness; and in practical matters he has more receptivity and more variety of reflection than Carlyle. He lacked Carlyle's burning imagination, and so missed his great literary effects; but take him as an instructor on history and politics, and he is, I think, decidedly the more profitable. Macaulay's essay on Barère will give you more intelligent comprehension of the French Revolution than Carlyle's on Mirabeau, or than any similar number of pages of his History. I will confess, indeed, to having read the History with intense interest three times, without having got any steady light on the Revolution beyond the overwhelming impression it gives of the nervous state of the population, as revealed in the great episodes, which seize one almost like a hallucination, till before the Bastille one's blood tingles with the roar of the crowd, and one's fingers seem to close on a weapon. So with the two men's treatment of Frederick. Macaulay will give you an admirably sane and instructive, and what is more, a brilliantly well-written account of the hero's whole career in one essay, which is equally valuable as a preparation for Carlyle's great small beer chronicle and as a purgative after it. As historians, the two men come singularly to resemble each other in their final status. Carlyle, who made light of Macaulay in general as Macaulay did of him, dismissed the History of England as a "book to which four hundred editions could not lend any permanent value, there being no great depth of sense in it at all and a very great quantity of rhetorical wind and other ingredients, which are the reverse of sense."[1] It may be so; but that is just what some of us say of a large part of the History of Frederick. Both men were at bottom unphilosophical; and, what is not so obvious, both men receded further from general views as they grew older, leaning more and more towards rule of thumb and the study of the historical picturesque, though Macaulay always dealt with historical matters more rationally than Carlyle did. In his early essay on Mitford's History of Greece, written when he was only twenty-four years of age, there is a ripeness and justness of reflection which would have done credit to an experienced thinker, and which is not surpassed in any of his later criticisms. There is no proportiona development of this side of Macaulay's genius; and he too ends with writing a history which is a brilliant story,[2] though with more concern for collecting useful information than is shown by Carlyle. The latter attempts nothing like Macaulay's third chapter.

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[1] Mr. Froude says: "With English literature he [Carlyle] was as familiar as Macaulay was. French, German and Italian he knew infinitely better than Macaulay." (*London Life*, ii., 257.) As to French and Italian literature Mr. Froude will find small credence; and I for one cannot believe the statement even as to English literature.

For the writing of history Carlyle had unquestionably some splendid gifts, in particular that singularly intense imagination which seemed to let him literally see, in vesture and gesture, the people of whom he had to write. Where there is a scene to be realised, or a personage to be presented, no historian of any age approaches him in vividness; but in other and surely no less important matters he is as conspicuously awanting. No one has better put the case than Mr. Lowell :—

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[1] *London Life*, i., 452.

[2] Note his own remark: "The materials for an amusing narrative are immense." Letter to Napier, November 5th, 1841. Trevelyan's *Life*, ed. 1881, p. 413.

> "Mr. Carlyle's manner is not so well suited to the historian as to the essayist. He is always great in single figures, but there is neither gradation nor continuity. He has extraordinary patience and conscientiousness in the gathering and sifting of his material, but is scornful of commonplace facts and characters, impatient of whatever will not serve for one of his clever sketches, or group well in a more elaborate figure piece. He sees history, as it were, by flashes of lightning. A single scene, whether a landscape or an interior, a single figure, or a wild mob of men, whatever may be snatched by the eye in that moment of intense illumination, is minutely photographed by the memory. Every tree and stone, almost every blade of grass; every article of furniture in a room; the attitude or expression, nay, the very buttons and shoe-ties of a principal figure; the gestures of momentary passion in a wild throng; everything leaps into vision under that sudden glare with a painful distinctness that leaves the retina quivering. The intervals are absolute darkness. Mr. Carlyle makes us acquainted with the isolated spot where we happen to be when the flash comes, as if by actual eyesight, but there is no possibility of a comprehensive view."[1]

Now, it is very instructive to find that this historical method is one which, when he met with it in his younger days in another writer, to whom he went seeking for historic light, he condemned in the strongest terms. Read what he writes in his journal[2] in his thirty-fifth year, after reading Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather :"—

> "An amusing narrative, clear, precise, and I suppose accurate; but no more a history of Scotland than I am Pope of Rome. A series of palace intrigues and butcheries, and battles, little more important than those of Donnybrook Fair; all the while that Scotland, quite unnoticed, is holding on her course in industry, in arts, in culture, as if 'Langside' and 'Clean-the-Causeway' had remained unfought. Strange that a man

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[1] *My Study Windows*, pp. 102-3.

[2] *First Forty Years*, ii., 87.

should think he was writing the history of a nation while he was chronicling the amours of a wanton young woman called queen," and so forth.

Could any criticism strike more directly at his own work, above all at his longest and maturest work, his History of Friedrich? Palace intrigues and battles, certainly a hundred times more energetically told than those of Scott's limpid narrative, but still only intrigues and battles; and of the life of Prussia, of *her* developments in industry, in arts, in culture, not a chapter, not a page! It is incredible, till you search for yourself, how completely he has contrived to leave out the whole social and intellectual history of the people, in writing what he is certainly candid enough to call the History of Friedrich. Nay, so contracted have his interests become, such a mere story-teller has he grown in his mature age, so incapable is he become of harbouring any save the most elementary political ideas, that he does not even half tell the history of Friedrich, monstrously as he has swollen it out by his plan of systematised gossip. As Mr. Lowell points out, "we get very little notion of the civil administration of Prussia; and when he comes, in the last volume, to his hero's dealings with civil reforms, he confesses candidly that it would tire him too much to tell us about it, even if he knew anything at all satisfactory himself." The same tendency is obtrusive in his extremely interesting "Reminiscences," nine-tenths of which consist of vivacious personalities.[1]

All this points with unmistakable plainness to a progressive atrophy of Carlyle's intelligence on the side of ideas; a desuetude of his faculties in all save one or two directions—that of the vivid observation of details of life and character, and that of preaching Cæsarism as the only wear in politics, and zealously playing Boswell on an imperial scale to the most likely-looking of recent Cæsars. One can but say that if that is what Cæsarism does for a historian, the spectacle is enough to warn us against trying the creed as a nation. It is a plain case of dissolution in the individual mind—the cultivation of one or two faculties at the expense of all the rest—just as happens with a Cæsarised nation, be it imperial Rome or Napoleonic France. In his last days, Carlyle's historic faculty was attenuated to the merest thread of story-telling; and after setting-out in life with a perception that Scottish history only became humanly interesting at the Reformation,[1] and after narrowing his grasp from the French Revolution to Cromwell's part in the English Revolution, and yet further to the domestic annals, as it were, of the house of Friedrich the Great, we find him at last recounting, with an eye to adult readers, the bare annals of the early kings of Norway, a piece of story-telling much less significant than Scott's "Tales of a Grandfather," which really were composed in the first instance for a child. I remember when the papers on the Early Kings of Norway appeared. I was still in my teens, and one of Carlyle's most besotted admirers—I mention this to show how a powerful and narrow-minded writer may put stumbling-blocks in the way of young people. Filled with spurious conceptions and insincere convictions from his books, I eagerly read the new work of the Master, as I had read nearly all that went before. Not satisfied with reading his abstract, I devoutly made an abstract of that for myself; and I don't think I shall ever quite forgive him for that particular waste of my then not very valuable time.

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[1] "One faculty alone survives: the power of etching vignettes of still or human life remains wholly unimpaired; and what a power!" Dr. Garnett, *Life*, p. 150. Cf. Arnold, *Discourses in America*, pp. 163-5.

When all is considered, of course, there is something to be said for Carlyle's plan of telling a story in vivid details, leaving the philosophising of it to future generations. Philosophical histories tend to go out of fashion, and men go back to the facts for themselves, and philosophise them afresh to their own taste.[2] But hat defence will serve Macaulay quite as well as Carlyle; and, urthermore, not only does it beg the question as to the accuracy f the historian's reproduction, but it takes Carlyle down from the igh position he aspired to hold. For he really thought, in his ne-idea'd exaltation, that the vehement empiricism with which e peppered his "Friedrich," in the tasting of which the reader of the future will have only the alternatives of a smile and a curse—that this really was historical thinking and historical teaching. It was a grotesque delusion. As he goes on, one sees, even the literary art deteriorates on some sides with the shrinkage of the mental outlook; though there is certainly much in "Friedrich" that is extremely entertaining. The temperamental need to be striking, the developed appetite for piquancy, becomes a foible, which jars on every discerning reader. As Mr. Lowell remarks, he went in part the way of Edward Irving. He began by dazzling his audience rather than persuading them; and henceforth "the curse was upon him; he must attract; he must astonish;" till in the end he became "the purely literary man, less concerned about what he says than about how he shall say it to best advantage." He praised Emerson[1] for having the opposite ambition, quite wrongly, I think—for surely Emerson, at least in his early days, is a great seeker and chooser of phrase—but he himself became viciously verbalist. The champion of veracity could never be content with stating a fact simply: it must glitter and sparkle and snap. I remember to have heard of how an American star actor in melodrama chided his supernumeraries for want of animation in a military march-past. His language is only in small part fit for publication. "Blank, blank," he shouted, "do you call that marching? Jump, you blank!" Carlyle's supernumeraries and stage properties have so to jump. General Hamley makes a good deal of havoc of the "gilded farthings" of style in the "Friedrich," the absurd periphrasis of observations to the effect that Queen

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[1] *Journal*, Feb. 28, *First Forty Years*, ii., 73, 88; *Lectures on Heroes*, iv., *re* Knox.

[2] Mr. Froude writes:—"Whether the history of humanity can be treated philosophically or not; whether any evolutionary law of progress can be traced in it or not; the facts must be delineated first with the clearness and fulness which we demand in an epic poem or a tragedy. We must have the real thing before we can have a science of a thing." (*London*

Life, ii., 204.) Mr. Froude forgets that Carlyle always assumes he is giving us the lesson as well as the facts, and that his "facts" are Carlylised pictures and versions.

[1] In the preface to the first English ed. of the *Essays*.

Anne is dead; the absurd passion for having an animated tag at every ending, so that when something happens we have the reflection that "Here lies a business fallen out, such as seldom occurred before." Mr. John Morley, approaching the popular Macaulay in the spirit set up in young England by Carlyle a generation ago, denounces among other things his glaring colour and "stamping emphasis." No writer better deserves that blame than Carlyle, to whom Mr. Morley never thinks of applying it. Always over-emphatic, he came in the end to have nothing but emphasis left. Now, this engrossing passion for picturesqueness and animation leads inevitably to a perversion of the very facts so presented. As General Hamley again has it,

> "No historian was ever more picturesque; none studied more how, by carefully-chosen or carefully-invented epithets, to give force and individuality to a scene or character. But the result of habitually treating everything and everybody, except a few oddly-selected heroes and their doings, in a jeering, semi-contemptuous way, is to produce an effect which resembles life only in the same way as the work of mediæval carvers in gargoyles, brackets, and church-doors resembles nature. Everywhere there is exaggeration and distortion, as if we were looking at things in a convex mirror."[1]

And this applies even to his best biographical work, of which his "Life of Sterling" may be taken as the high-water mark. No biography excels that in general electric quality; and some of the portraits, above all that terrible one of Coleridge, would alone prove him a man of genius. But is that or any other of the hostile portraits in his books, letters, and journals, really just? I am comforted in thinking that as regards a critic so determinedly severe on other men's weaknesses, none of his admirers can decently charge one-sidedness on the criticisms I offer here, where I do not claim to present portraits but to discuss teachings. Analyse Carlyle in the spirit in which he depicted Coleridge, dwelling only on your antipathies, and you could make a repellent picture enough, even without genius. The truth is, he was too intense to be catholic: he was always a creature of impressions, too much of a feeler, a too little of knower or scientist. Goethe, he thought, emancipated him from Byronic self-commiseration, but it was not so: he only afforded him an interregnum between imitative and spontaneous egoism. And, as General Hamley observes, the young gentlemen who formerly adopted Byronism, or the despairing romantic, afterwards fell into Carlyle, or the despairing prophetic.

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[1] *Thomas Carlyle; a Criticism,* p. 97.

XII.

Certainly no more self-conscious writer than Carlyle is to be found in the biography of the period. He may have grown less self-engrossed in later life, but in his prime, in the very act of denouncing self-consciousness, he is the most uneasy of literary egotists. It was indeed part of his constitution, and doubtless a condition of his genius, of which the strength lay precisely in vividness of feeling, along with the capacity to follow and reproduce in words that which he felt. Every man whose work lies in challenging his own consciousness for literary purposes must needs be inclined to be, as we say, self-conscious; but Carlyle is unique in biography, in the unrestrainedness of his egotistic indulgence. It comes out constantly in his correspondence with his friends and relations, alike when he is despondent and when he is complacent, a chronic and lamentable outcry, which must have darkened life in his home. We can see him all the time feeling what a picturesque sufferer he is, posing himself in his dyspeptic despair before himself in his journal; before his mother, and before his brother; and, we can divine, making his wife's life a burden by his daily repinings. As he candidly puts it in speaking of his first lecture: "I pitied myself, so agitated, terrified, driven desperate and furious."[1] He is always pitying himself: if he had pitied his fellow-creatures half as much, his books would have sounded a different key.

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[1] *London Life*, i., 103.

At times the note changes to complacency, and we learn half-a-dozen times over how original and powerful he felt his own "French Revolution" to be; how it came flamingly from his living heart;[1] how it was "a perfect oak clog, which all the hammers in the world will make no impression on;" how it was like a certain old Scotchman, with invincible breadth of body, a shaggy smile, and a deep voice;[2] how it was "one of the savagest books written for several centuries," written by a wild man, "looking king and beggar in the face with an indifference of brotherhood and an indifference of contempt;"[3] and so on. Now, all this, though tolerably boastful, is nothing far out of the way of human experience: we have most of us a fair share of self-satisfaction in our respective spheres; though not always, perhaps, so much as this; but it is to be observed that this is the self-consciousness of a man who affected to despise and denounce self-consciousness, and who always jeered at other men's self-conceit. Here, as on so many other points, we feel that the preaching was an affectation, or, if that word be too crude, that it was an opinion got in a merely negative way, and forming no part of the preacher's personality. He has obviously never a notion of working on the principle he lays down for others; and in point of fact, it is not conceivable that he ever could so act any more than he could put in practice any of his formulas about silence and serenity and action—all matters for which he had no vocation. For the way to conquer self-consciousness (the vicious excess of it, that is: the normal activity of it is not vicious but saving) is not purposely to forget yourself, as Carlyle vainly proposed, but to know yourself; to know clearly what you are, how moved, how informed, where weak, where not so weak; to know how you came by your ideas, and how much human ideas, in a general way, are worth, as tested for you by your own mental processes. This kind of self-appraisement, honestly done, means tolerance and fellow-feeling—and *there* lies the deliverance from obtrusive self-consciousness. But Carlyle's essentially negative cast of mind, his inability to feel or think strongly or cordially, except by way of mere hero-worship, or of negation of some one else's feeling or action, or of repetition of some cosmic platitude—this is sure to foster self-contemplation of the sentimental or diseased kind; and Carlyle in this way is as visibly a *poseur* before his mirror as Byron. If any one feels this to be an unwarrantable saying, and is convinced that Carlyle was sincere and earnest, let him just ask himself whether Byron in his turn was not sincere and earnest also. Here we come back to our physiological standpoint. Even a transcendentalist, in looking at Byron, cannot but feel that his was a pathological case; that he carried in brain and nerves and body the springs and motives of his morbid utterances and unworthy acts; that he no more "made his character," as the transcendentalists say, than he made his club-foot. I want to claim the same thing for Carlyle; because I claim it for all of us. From one point of view, therefore, nothing could be idler than the dissection of his temperamental vices of repulsion, impatience, and inconsistency: scientifically speaking, it is as if the doctor denounced his patient for his flaws of constitution. But the trouble is that this man has just been doing that and almost nothing else all his life in *his* criticism of his environment, and that he has to an indefinite extent helped to possess people with the belief that such denunciations are better than diagnoses, and that prescriptions so heralded are the best. Working in that temper, he is no trustworthy guide or light; you cannot translate his denunciation into sound diagnosis, if you would; the process is radically wrong, and must be discredited. And to do this it is necessary to pull Carlyle to pieces and show what he really was.

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[1] *London Life*, p. 84. [2] *Ib.*, p. 95. [3] *Ib.*, p. 96.

Let us acknowledge, of course, that he himself, being so sensitive and so variable, indicted himself often enough, and truly enough. "Alas!" he writes to his mother, "I trace in myself such a devilish disposition on many sides, such abysses of self-conceit, disgust, and insatiability;"[1] and again, "Let us give no ear to vain-glory, to self-conceit, the wretchedest of things, the devil's chief work, I think, here below;"[2] and again to his brother: "Deliver me, ye Supreme Powers, from self-conceit."[1] But that was beyond the power of Omnipotence. "*Ego et Rex Meus*," he writes again, speaking harshly of his friend Sterling:[2] "That is the tune we all sing. Down with ego." That would have meant, in Carlyle's case, a reversal of his whole nature;[3] a substitution of patient reason for the supposed inspirations of instinct; a revisal of the first thoughts born of spleen and passion and natural bias, by the second and third thoughts which analyse inspiration and constitute science. Immeasurably more heartfelt than his self-abasement is his abasement of other people. Listen to some of his characterisations: this of Roebuck: "An acrid, sandy, barren character, dissonant-speaking, trivial, with a singular exasperation; restlessness as of diseased vanity written over his face when you come near it."[4] And this of the early friends of John Mill: "There is a vociferous platitude in them, a mangy, hungry discontent; their very joy like that of a thing scratching itself under disease of the itch."[5] And this of Maurice: "One of the most uninteresting men of genius that I can meet in society is poor Maurice to me; all twisted, screwed, wiredrawn, with such a restless sensitiveness, the utmost inability to let nature have fair play with him. I do not remember that a word ever came from him betokening clear recognition or healthy free sympathy with anything."[6] Observe that every phrase in these aspersions might, with almost perfect accuracy, have been applied to himself; and consider what the comparative value of the man's judgments was.

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[1] *London Life*, p. 118. [2] *Ib.*, p. 132.

It is wonderful how many of Carlyle's assaults recoil on himself. "Surely," he wrote once, "the pleasure of despising, at all times and in itself a dangerous luxury, is much safer *after* the toil of examining than before it."[7] Compare his own later treatment of Darwinism; and consider the bearing of this among many passages on veracity:—

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[1] *London Life*, p. 128.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 139; cf. p. 142.

[3] Mr. Froude admits his "extraordinary arrogance." *First Forty Years*, ii., 394.

[4] *London Life*, i., 19. [5] *Ib.*, p. 108. [6] *Ib.*, p.126.

[7] Essay on *State of German Literature.*

> "But have we well considered a divergence *in thought* from what is the fact? Have you considered the man whose very thought is a lie to him and to us? He too is a frightful man; repeating about the Universe on every hand what is not; the sure herald of ruin to all that follow him, that know with *his* knowledge! And would you learn how to get a mendacious thought, there is no surer recipe than carrying a loose tongue. The lying thought, you already either have it, or will soon get it, by that method. He who lies with his very tongue, he clearly enough has long ceased to think truly in his mind. Does he, in any sense, 'think?' All his thoughts and imaginations, if they extend beyond mere beaverisms, astucities, and sensualisms, are false, incomplete, perverse, untrue even to himself. He has become a false mirror of this Universe: not a small mirror only, but a crooked, bedimmed and utterly deranged one. But all loose tongues too are akin to lying ones; are insincere at the best, and go rattling with little meaning; the thought lying languid at a great distance behind them, if thought there be behind them at all. Gradually there will be none or little! How can the thought of such a man, what he calls thought, be other than false?"[1]

Deadliest of all, perhaps, is the recoil of this judgment on Landor:—

> "A tall man, with gray hair, and large, fierce-rolling eyes: of the most restless, impetuous vivacity, not to be held in by the most perfect breeding —expressing itself in high-coloured superlatives, indeed in reckless exaggeration; now and then in a . . . laugh, not of sport but of mockery; a wild man, whom no extent of culture has been able to tame! His intellectual faculty seemed to be weak in proportion to his violence of temper; the judgment he gives about anything is more apt to be wrong than right—as the inward whirlwind shows him this side or the other of the object; and *sides* of an object are all that he sees. He is not an original man; in most cases one but sighs over the spectacle of commonplace torn to rags. . . ."[2]

It is an amazing coincidence.

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[1] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, No. v., *Stump Orator*, p. 171.

[2] Letter to Emerson, *Corr.*, i., 277-8.

XIII.

Let us come back for a moment to our first conception of him as a temperament, carrying on a strong hereditary strain. We have seen him acquiring culture of various kinds, and for a time wearing the fashions of these. His first published writings are in a carefully though never feebly conventional style, as his early literary letters are written in the deplorable epistolary style of the generation after Sterne and Johnson, a style which makes us wonder what our own juvenile letters would look like if they were preserved. Then comes the German period, which leaves marked traces, especially of Richter, though he disputed that;[1] and gradually he finds his characteristic style, which is a powerful development of that of his father's talk; the development being the outcome of a wide reading, which we might know had gone with pleasure to Sterne, even if he had not told us so.[2] Here you have a gradual resurgence of heredity and temperament, an abandonment of the spurious mysticism of the studious period, and a gradual taking stand on a few powerful prepossessions—hot resentment of human feebleness and faultiness, of all incompetence, of anarchy, also of candid atheism; and admiration of all masterfulness of which the stress falls on other people. See now how this physiologically retrogressive development exhibits itself in his political or social principles. In early youth he is simply a Radical, here following his mother perhaps more than his father, and carrying the principle to extravagance. But soon he began to turn on the saner Radicals, as with his temper he was bound to do, and to develop the theoretic Cæsarism to which he was led by his mere aversion to democracy. For a time he retained very strongly—indeed, he never quite lost—his sympathy with the poor and the toiling; and he was vehement if uninstructive in his demand for some attempt on the part of those who call themselves the governing class to devise some means for saving the workers from the periodic miseries arising out of industrial anarchy. Of course he is quite untrustworthy in his contrast between present and past conditions. Like Mr. Ruskin, he always falsifies the Middle Ages, even when the truth stares him in the face; and this in part for the same reason: he never has patience to expiscate a general truth, though he had plenty for finding out isolated and purely personal facts in the lives of his heroes. There can be no grosser delusion than the notion that social anarchy or *laissez-faire* is a modern development. Any one who will study history watchfully can see that it has always subsisted, even alongside of gross tyranny; and that industrial misery has in all times been chronic on some scale, though in the scanty populations of the Middle Ages it is so much less anomalous. It seems never to have occurred to Carlyle how much of the apparently new anarchy around him was simply the arithmetical increase contingent on an increase of population, such as England never before saw. To-day, industrial depression or dislocation throws men idle in hundreds or thousands, where of old it affected them in twos and threes or dozens; and it shows how essentially superficial, nay, irrational, we all are when we make much of the large masses of misery, and make light of the small, as if a hundred starving men suffered more than one. They do not and cannot. You cannot add up different people's pain or misery as you add beads or cheeses: the thousand sufferers are just suffering units, each suffering on the average no more than the one sufferer in the Middle Ages did. It is just repetition of one person's pain. We are all duped by the psychological illusion of numbers. For instance, there are drowned annually in this country, for the most part one at a time, between 2000 and 3000 persons; and we read of many of the single cases with just a passing regret; whereas if half the number were drowned at once we should all be horrified—that is, if it happened near us, for if it were in China we should only be faintly disturbed. So it is with our trade crises; it is numbers that affect us, and make us think that a new principle of evil has appeared in human affairs. And Carlyle, the man of nervous impressions and headlong impulses, was of all people the readiest to feel the arithmetical stimulus.

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[1] *First Forty Years*, i., 396-7.

[2] Essay on Richter; and *First Forty Years*, i., 396.

As it happens, this superficial tendency of ours is for the present a main guarantee of humane progress, this being one of the partial compensations of immense increase in human numbers; and there is no need to blame Carlyle beyond pointing out how much further he was misled than other people in historical matters. In his positive attitude he was praiseworthy enough. He put in a very telling fashion the essential impotence of the old Whiggism when he said of an *Edinburgh Reviewer* (mistakenly supposed to be Macaulay) who discussed his "Chartism," that the Whig's principle in regard to working-class misery was simply, "that the pigs be taught to die without squealing;"[1] and he should have full credit for refusing to accept that solution; though on the other hand he took a fairly easy course in simply demanding that something should be done, without saying what or how. And in regard to that great problem of the blindfold increase of population, which struck him so little on the concrete side, but which gave such serious pause to more circumspect men, he had nothing to say but the crudest empiricism, pointing to the unpeopled condition of large parts of the earth's surface,[2] as the man at the corner of the street might do, and still does do, as if that were a solution. One tries to conceive what England would be like, ruled on Carlyle's principles. There would be work for everybody for a little while, under the guidance of Captains of Industry, all under a Supreme Captain; a state of things which, in the absence of social science, would probably double the population in about twenty years. Then when it was found that, under the principle of thrift, or restricted consumption, the force for the production of common articles was rapidly outrunning the demand, there being no notion anywhere of multiplying the demand for the higher sorts of products, the Supreme Captain would presumably see fit to draft off superfluous people by the hundred thousand to the localities Carlyle had indicated, Chinese Tartary and South America, and so on, as one

[1] *London Life*, i., 192.

[2] *Sartor Resartus*; B. iii., Ch. 4. On this point he declaimed to the last. *First Forty Years*, ii., 137.

moves bodies of cattle. At which stage, perhaps, when the new colonies broke down, and the selected emigrants recoiled from the fate forced upon them, the Supreme Captain's head might be in some danger.

But the positively vicious side of Carlyle's social theory, the element in his teaching which neutralises or, at least, counteracts all the good, and makes him on the face of his books preponderatingly a force for darkness, is his strange misreading of the lesson of history on the social effects of this method of captaincy. We know how in imperial Rome the industrial problem was solved by a series of Supreme Captains. On the one hand there was systematic public charity, the feeding of the multitude by the State, a practice which ignorant people will tell you was invented by "Christianity;" on the other hand, public works. And what was the outcome? A progressive demoralisation of the populace, who lost manliness and energy precisely as their affairs were more and more completely taken out of their hands. Imperial Rome was in large part a splendid city, ultimately peopled with ignoble men. We to-day, in our ignoble cities, have this one great hope, that we shall conserve our manhood and at length transform our cities by intelligent co-operation, never by sinking to the status of well-fed animals dependent for well-being on the rule of one or a few. But the principle of hate and contempt in Carlyle, the constant virulent depreciation of those around him, made him ultimately incapable of seeing that the multitude needed to be aught but well-fed and well-worked slaves. "It is indeed strange," writes Mr. Lowell, "that one who values Will so highly in the greatest should be blind to its infinite worth in the least of men."[1] Strange, and yet not so, when you remember that this man could only see things in flashes, humanity like all the rest. He compiles the "Life of Cromwell," which is the best possible illustration of the ruinous effect even of a good despotism on men; since Cromwell, after his great administration, left England weaker and worse than he found her; stripped and shorn of the self-relying energy which made the great Rebellion; destitute of the high spirit which shone in the strong men who at first surrounded himself; fit only to call back Charles the Second, and hurrah for him. Nay more, the good despot had no rational notion of providing another good despot in his place; but deliberately left it to a plainly incompetent son. To all which Carlyle was deaf and blind; having no verdict on the situation save a malediction on the England which his hero had made.[1] From such a thinker, what political light is to be looked for on our latter-day problems? Surely little.

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[1] *My Study Windows*, p. 98.

XIV.

As he goes on, two notes of his utterance come out more and more—negation in doctrine and inhumanity in practice. The "Latter Day Pamphlets" grow wearisome by their roaring reiteration of invective and aspersion, of the names of God and Devil, even where you feel the invective is at the start rightly aimed; and from weariness of their mill-round of outcry you pass to anger at their heartlessness. Carlyle's friends have assured us that in his personal life he was a passionate hater of cruelty; and though they make a great deal of traits of compassionate feeling which I should hope are common to about half the educated men and nearly all the women in England, it is at least a comfort to know that when he saw or heard of a cruel thing in private life he indignantly protested. His protest, as was natural, was at times as unreasoning as his justifications of the cruelty that did not come directly in his way. Thus he spent much indignation on the putting of live mice into the cages of serpents in the Zoological Gardens,[2] a course certainly not so cruel as the ordinary catching of mice in traps, which his own womankind doubtless practised. And the same man who thus sentimentally lashed himself up over an apparent case of unintended cruelty on a very small scale, could endorse and make light of cruelty the most frightful and the most wilful when his prejudices came into play. Take—though there it passes into humour—that capital story told by Mr. James, senior, of the dispute he listened to one evening between Carlyle and Tennyson on the practices of William the Conqueror. Carlyle had been talking in the style of his "Past and Present," girding at political economy and all modern materialistic tendencies, and winding up his declamatory periods with the aspiration, "Oh, for a day of Duke William again!"

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[1] Cf. Mr. Morley's comment on Carlyle's panegyric of Francia, *Miscellanies*, i., 193.

[2] Conway, as cited, p. 82.

> "In vain," says Mr. James, "his fellow Arcadian protested that England was no longer the England of Duke William, nor even of Oliver Cromwell, but a totally new England, with a self-consciousness all new and totally unlike theirs; Carlyle only chanted or canted the more lustily his inevitable ding-dong: 'Oh, for a day of Duke William again!' Tired out at last, the long-suffering poet cried, 'I suppose you *would* like your Duke William back, to cut off some twelve hundred Cambridgeshire gentlemen's legs, and leave their owners squat upon the ground, that they mightn't be able any longer to bear arms against him!' 'Ah!' shrieked out the remorseless bagpipes, in a perfect colic of delight to find its supreme blast thus unwarily invoked—'Ah! that *was* no doubt a very sad thing for the Duke to do; but somehow he conceived he had a right to do it; and upon the whole he had!' 'Let me tell your returning hero one thing, then,' replied his practical-minded friend, 'and that is that he had better steer clear of my precincts, or he will feel my knife in his guts very soon!' It was, in fact," adds Mr. James, "this indignant and unaffected prose of the distinguished poet that alone embalmed the insincere colloquy to my remembrance."[1]

Insincere no doubt; that is to say, Carlyle could not have heard with equanimity of such an act of butchery in his own time, say, by Bismarck. His theories he mostly kept for past conditions; when they came to be tested they were apt to break down. Thus we find that for Napoleon Third, whose policy and practice he would assuredly have praised to the skies if it had occurred in a previous century, he could find no sympathy, early pronouncing him "an intensified Pig, as must one day appear."[2] And Mr. Conway, while sadly admitting how utterly wrong Carlyle was on the American slavery question and the Civil War, tells us how, when he related to Carlyle, while walking in Hyde Park, some of the cruelties which he knew to be practised by Southern slave owners, the sage was so loud in his indignant comments as to attract the notice of passers-by. Yes, you could always rely on Carlyle for *that*. But is it then a vindication of a popular and influential teacher that while he went frightfully wrong in his published teaching, upholding cruelty and iniquity, and deriding mercy and righteousness, there was a lot of good in him if you only took him the right way in private? Really, the vindication of Carlyle by some of his friends comes to sound very like Captain Cuttle's exposition of the merits of his watch. You have only to "put him back half-an-hour every morning, and about another quarter towards the afternoon, and it's a watch that'll do you credit."

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[1] *Atlantic Monthly*, as cited, p. 597.

[2] Conway, as cited, p. 91. Mr. Conway states that after Bismarck's dealings with Catholicism, Carlyle ceased to speak of him

Well, men will not long be satisfied with such a chronometer. They will see that Carlyle became a reckless mouthpiece of injustice and inhumanity, and that he put as much zest into his evil work as ever he did into his good. His "History of Friedrich" is half the time an offensive sophistication of the gravest moral issues, to the end of making out that when his hero did wrong it became right. And what shall we say of the pamphlet in which, inspired by sheer malevolent instinct, parading as moral fervour, he did his furious best to resist and discredit the attempts of humane men to treat criminals rationally and decently, as creatures morally sick, instead of as wild beasts? I confess I never can read these raging pages without indignation. It is as if we stood in face of the caged multitude of the morally maimed, halt, and blind; darkened human souls, distorted and perverted from the womb; helpless manifestations of the evil that has lived from the foundations of the world, cursed often with evil instincts as carnivorous animals are endowed with the thirst for rapine; and as if we saw come before them, gnashing his teeth, this raucous prophet, hooting like a Yahoo, snarling like a beast of prey. Are the brutalest instincts of the rare, then, to be the guides of civilised men in their treatment of their miscreated brethren? Did it need a professed moralist, declaiming in the name of God, to prescribe a line of action that in the ages of brutality was freely followed by the brutal many as a matter of course? The whole pamphlet is an outrage on good feeling and sane morals; a shouting and stamping proclamation of the crudest and most odious instincts by which men have from time immemorial been moved in their treatment of crime, real and artificial. The instincts of the beadle and the bargee, the instinct which sends half the mob to see the black flag raised above the prison—these are the springs of Carlyle's prison doctrine.

Observe here what an imposture his transcendental doctrine of God and humanity has become. After an atrocious incitation to the most cruel ill-usage of the wretched men of whom he speaks, after revelling in the idea of flogging them and reducing their lives to gloomy misery, he half recoils from his own ferocity, and constructs a theological sophism on the lines of the Dark Ages, to the effect that while he hates these men his hate for them is not diabolic but divine; that God Himself hates them, and that, therefore, his servants must. And this is Fichtean Idealism applied to ethics! The All-pervading "Spirit," the Infinite "Sustainer" of the Universe, having produced these moral phenomena as "He" produces others, working out the "Divine Idea" in darkness as in light, is to take a leaf out of the ethical bible of the venomous worms He has made, and hate the wretched clay which His own hands have fashioned! And this is Theism and Idealist philosophy; and the man who propounded it is to rank as a thinker and a moralist! Alas, alas!

What avails it against this shocking misleading of men that as he grew old the prophet developed benevolence in his private life?[1] Was the harm any the less accomplished? On this one point I believe he is largely responsible for the fact that, after one quick growth of humanity and enlightened practice in the matter of criminal treatment, our system has remained stupidly conservative, undeveloping, and mainly injurious. Happily, he could not do such harm in other directions where he taught as ill. He helped to promote the most unworthy feeling in England in regard to the American Civil War; but he could not perpetuate it; and, after making himself pitiable in the eyes of all wise men by his folly, he in some measure repented him of his grievous error, and even sought in a somewhat pathetic manner to make amends, by his gift of books to Harvard University. Let us hope that that seed of right feeling which he sowed among his tares of political teaching in his own country is here in a deeper sense to-day making amends for what he did in trampling down good grain of other men's sowing. In his latter years he bitterly declared that while men paid him honour they in no way believed or obeyed his teaching;[1] just as Mr. Ruskin has protested since. It is well that it is so, as regards his view of right method. His school, fortunately, remains impotent as regards the direction of national action; fortunately, I say, because, apart from Mr. Ruskin's valuable gleams of practical insight, the school goes from bad to worse. It was at its best, perhaps, in Kingsley, who, though ready with the others to extol to the skies the action of Governor Eyre in Jamaica, retained enough of wholesome manhood and democratism to rejoice in such a book as Mill's "Liberty," and to avow that the reading of it made him a better man on the spot[2]—this when his master was anathematising it. But Kingsley's influence for good was half undone by his hysteria and his sentimentalism, which are poison to science; and it is matter for thankfulness that Mr. Froude, in whom the same qualities are becoming more aggressive in each new book he produces, is rapidly destroying *his* influence for harm. When one contemplates his thinly-veiled Chauvinism, his facile and purposeless rhetoric, his destitution of sincere political insight,[3] one wonders what

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[1] See Mr. Froude's tributes to his leniencies and generosities, *London Life*, ii., 255, 456. But Mr. Froude's pictures of his amenities cannot be accepted as complete. Compare Mr. Shepherd's *Life*, ii., 268.

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[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, ii., 478.

[2] Prof. Bain's *J. S. Mill*, p. 112; Kingsley's *Life*, ii. 88.

[3] Even from a quasi-Carlylean point of view, Mr. Froude is found wanting. Mr. Ruskin in 1880 found that "Year by year his words have grown more hesitating and helpless." (*Fors Clavigera*, New Series, iv., 111.)

Carlyle would have said of it if he could have lived thus long, even with his faculties withered. I have heard a story—possibly fictitious—of how the prophet once dismissed a popular novelist who went to him for sympathy. "Let me tell ye," the sage is said to have shouted over the bannisters to his retreating visitor, "ye're gangin' straight to the devil, and ye're gangin' by the verra vulgarest road!" To Mr. Froude, following up "Oceana" with "The Two Chiefs of Dunboy," and that finally with a "Life of Beaconsfield," that monition to-day would not be inapt.

XV.

It is somewhat singular to find, in this connection, that the biography of the pupil and admirer has been a means of bringing the master into extensive discredit. Of course that was in a minor measure to be expected. No man of high literary and moral standing ever had his life told in full detail without falling somewhat from the level to which public hero-worship had raised him. Dr. Johnson must so have fallen in the eyes of the outside public, which had revered the moralist, when they read the details of Boswell; Scott certainly suffered in the same way, so that men accused Lockhart of malice against his father-in-law;[1] George Eliot has so suffered in the eyes of some of us; and Carlyle of all men was bound to illustrate the tendency. So many readers had loosely read him, and vaguely reverenced him, that the sharp outlines of his every-day personality, when revealed with any degree of candour—and Mr. Froude has been laudably candid on these points—must needs create an extensive searching of hearts. His admirers say this feeling will pass away, and that he will be replaced on his old pedestal. I hope and believe he will not. I cannot conceive that his confused and rudely prejudiced teachings in the mass will ever again seem to educated people the utterances of a wise and profound thinker, whether in ethics, in politics, or in philosophy. But what may profitably happen is that, while his flagrant errors become more and more palpable to all, his one or two vital and clear perceptions of truth may stand out, purified from their dross, to sympathetic eyes. Whatever he practised, he preached sincerity, honesty, and earnestness in all things; and in the conduct of national life he insisted vehemently on the impossibility of the common weal prospering while its entire industry is carried on by the mere random lights of competing individual interests. That principle we shall carry with us throughout our present inquiry. Taken singly, indeed, it can do little. Again and again we shall have occasion to repeat that an instinct, an aspiration, will never solve the problems of society without a thorough science of them. Hysterical people are now telling us that they are going to be solved by the action of the Salvation Army, an institution resting on hallucination, and flourishing on unintelligence and superstition. That will not come about. Hallucination never did and never will save a State; and it is enough to remind rational people that this phenomenon is really the measure of the special intellectual backwardness of England, is peculiar to England, and is regarded with wondering contempt by Continental peoples. The fact that Carlyle-worshippers now connect it with the name of Carlyle,[1] points to a new development of Nemesis in that direction.

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[1] See Carlyle's Essay on Scott, *beginning.*

Finally, as to the man Carlyle, I for one will not refuse to anticipate a relaxation among posterity of the kind of critical rigour I have been employing against him. For that rigour I have no apologies to make: it seems to me fully justified by the facts; and it is amply invited by his own more than rigour towards everything he disliked or dissented from. But it will be the measure of the progress and prosperity of future generations, how far they are able to look tranquilly back on Carlyle's errors, and pityingly see in them finger-posts to dangerous places in the past march of humanity, places where blinded men painfully stumbled and fell. Nay, even now, even in the act of rigorous judgment, we can avoid ill-will, profiting by his own example. His worst error was to cherish a host of blind repulsions, so that at length he came to speak as if the universe were a mere medley of forces of evil. Let us above all things shun the darkness into which he fell. We are even now just beginning, as a nation, to acknowledge the central truth on which he insisted, that our affairs will never go aright if we proceed on the principle of each for himself, with an ever vaster stratum of misery and an ever wider area of dwarfed life, a mere spurious semblance of civilisation. At such a time it is fitting that, in the act of scanning narrowly the counsels of all who offer guidance, we should deny none the credit of having at least seen that the road ahead lay among precipices and morasses, in which of old whole nations have sunk, and nations may sink again.

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[1] See Mr. Stead's *Review of Reviews* for September, 1890.

JOHN STUART MILL.

I.

To pass from the presence of Carlyle to that of Mill is to turn from a stormy and sinister to a serene and humane spirit, whose traits are the more winning and welcome from the contrast. The difference might be loosely expressed by the figure of two landscapes: one, say, that of a rugged and volcanic land, lit by the fitful flame of recurrent eruptions, in whose blaze at times hill and valley are lit up with an unearthy clearness, so that close at hand in the ancient lava you see the serpent crawl; while the vista, picked out in distances by peaks of fire, is the more menacing and oppressive. The other picture is, let us say, of a sunlit land on a morning towards the end of winter, ere spring has come. The trees, stirred by no wind, stand out leafless but graceful in the pure daylight; and though clouds veil some of the farther mountain tops, the vistas are clear and fair; while in the cool benignant air there is an unspeakable promise of warmth and life to come. But all figures are confessions of imperfect conception, and to many an eye the two landscapes of our fancy, seen under changed skies, will look strangely different.

What all will admit is that these two thinkers represent a profound temperamental difference, affecting all their ways of thinking and by consequence all their conclusions, so that, though both dubbed heretical, and though their ideals at one point almost coincided, they are almost more disparate than any conventionally opposed types, such as Radical and Tory, poet and scientist, or Catholic and Atheist. But it is important to remember that when they first came together as young men they attracted and liked each other; and it is interesting to note how they both come of northern stocks, different and yet both characteristically Scotch. James Mill is as recognisable a northern type—though I suspect there are such different types in all races—as James Carlyle; only we naturally compare him, a man of culture, with Thomas Carlyle rather than with the uncultured father. The younger Mill, in one of his most famous books, long afterwards propounded his belief that any general system of education was a "mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another."[1] It would have puzzled him, I think, to find two more different minds than his father and Thomas Carlyle, though the educational system under which these two were trained was substantially the same. James Mill's mother, a proud woman of some claims to family descent, and with aspirations to revert upwards through her son, seems to have had a large share in persuading her husband, a well-to-do country shoemaker, to give their boy at the outset an education better even than was thought to suffice for a minister—this before a patron intervened to send the lad to college. Thus James Mill had a more thorough training than Carlyle. The former went to Edinburgh at eighteen; the latter at fourteen, as the majority in those days did. In one point the two took the same course: both intended for the ministry, they both thought themselves into unbelief, and both turned aside from their proposed career; Mill, however, being actually licensed to preach, and making his renunciation the more deliberately, as befitted his maturer age.[2] There, as regards opinions, the identity ends. At one time Carlyle was a Radical, but he never was one in James Mill's way; and the two men were wholly opposed in their general attitude to life. Mill was, what Carlyle never became, a good Greek scholar; and in his youth, rationalist and utilitarian as he even then was, he nourished himself largely on Plato, which again is a proof that line of education is not at all certain to determine line of thought. You would expect Carlyle and not Mill to be the Platonist, but it was the other way. Carlyle, even in his would-be-mystic period, does not seem to have studied Plato; and later, even on Emerson's urging, he could not endure him; though he did afterwards enjoy him as an opponent of democracy; while the Mills, father and son, successively found in the philosopher who for Emerson was a transcendentalist, the best preparation for the pursuit of exact moral science.

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[1] *On Liberty*, ch. v. Pop. ed. p. 63.

[2] He was licensed in his twenty-sixth year. Dr. Bain's *James Mill: a Biography*, p. 22.

To some extent James Mill and Thomas Carlyle compare generally in their self-reliance, their simplicity of life, and their indifference to what men ordinarily pursue as pleasure; but Mill after coming to London worked much the harder of the two, and, what is more, made no outcry about it, which I hope is the more Scotch-like course. Both men were excellent talkers; but James Mill talked to persuade, and did do so, while Carlyle, as I have before said, did not in talk try to persuade, and convinced men, when at all, rather by magnetism than by reasoning. For the rest, alike independent, inaccommodating and masterful, they were far asunder in their aims. James Mill, though of an irritable and warm temperament, was essentially a thinker, a reasoner, an analyst, and a lover of freedom; while Carlyle was a feeler, a prophet, and in theory an apostle of tyrannous power. They seem never to have met, Mill having died soon after Carlyle settled in London; and from his opinion of Carlyle's early essays in the reviews [1] we may safely decide that they could never have drawn together. John Mill, in a remarkable way, held at that time a hand of each.

II.

One vainly speculates as to what a son of Carlyle's would have been like, if he had had one. Human heredity is thus far a science incapable of a precise prediction, though convincing enough in its retrospects, and though John Mill's case, for instance, raises no perplexities. James Mill married an English wife, a woman apparently of little force of character, and in her son the father's northern granite is seen transmuted into something less hard, more plastic, more loveable, and at the same time perhaps less strong. What qualities he clearly inherited were the high public spirit, the rectitude, the unwavering devotion to truth and justice, and the logical faculty which marked his father; and, coming as he did of such a stock, and beginning his remarkable education at his father's hands in his tenderest years, he represents a very high intellectual evolution indeed—two generations of the highest rational culture in a highly advantageous soil. You may say John Mill was a generation and a half nearer moral science than Carlyle, when they met. To the criticism of life Carlyle brought his masterful intuitions, his prejudices, his imagination, his earnestness, his negations and antagonisms, his fundamental intolerance and want of philosophy; where the young Mill brought a mind sensitive to the most various influences, lacking perhaps in some kinds of native power, but singularly and eminently fitted to get good from other men's intuitions where these were good, and to escape their contagion where they were evil. He had been trained, too, as no English youth of his time had been trained, to analyse beliefs and arguments, and to reach his own by connected and consistent reasoning. Between this training and his native amenity of temper he had become a rationalist of the most attractive type, catholic and yet earnest, vowed to science but spontaneously interested in the ideas of men of a quite different bias.

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[1] He "saw nothing in them to the last but insane rhapsody."—J. S. Mill's *Autobiography*, p. 161.

I have said of him[1] that he had a genius for justice, and that this was the secret of his influence; and yet on weighing the phrase I am in doubt as to its entire fitness. That open-minded receptivity of his is indeed one of the most winning of gifts; but perhaps a genius for justice, or the highest genius for justice, would be something less a matter of susceptibility, and a little more a matter of science. On freshly surveying his life and work, one becomes conscious of a certain sympathetic waywardness which every now and then took him a little to one or other side of truth, sometimes in pessimism, sometimes in optimism, sometimes in hostility, sometimes in eulogy, oftenest and furthest in the latter direction indeed, but always in a pure and high-minded way, and hardly ever from a small motive. Take for instance his critical treatment of the school in which he was trained, that of Bentham, and the school which most opposed it, that of the transcendentalists, represented in England by Coleridge. Certainly no man then could be trusted to deal out a more nearly even-handed justice to two such opposite schools; and yet, as he himself admits in his Autobiography, he has to some extent strained matters against Bentham and in favour of Coleridge. He explains characteristically that, writing as he did for an audience of Utilitarians, he saw fit to lay special stress on the flaws of Benthamism, and on the strong points of Coleridge's school, both things which that audience would be specially prone to overlook; and that the two sorts of stress in question were rectified by his other writings. But one doubts whether this is either just or politic. Surely one has no more right to press hardly on one's own side than to press hardly on the other; and surely Mill forgot that the special praise you give to an enemy, and the special blame you pass on a friend, are equally likely to be made too much of in the enemy's interest. In that case, too, it was certainly not the transcendental cause that most needed helping in England. Indeed, when we come to deal with Mill's latest utterances on religion, we shall see cause to surmise that, whatever be the full explanation in terms of heredity, he really had a certain constitutional bias to traditional supernaturalist views of life which his father's more firmly logical intelligence had outgrown. We are in fact led to feel that but for the training and indoctrination of his father, Mill would have been very much nearer supernaturalism throughout his whole life. Certainly he is most uncritical of Coleridge's glaring intellectual frailties, while laborious and, as I think, in part misleading, in his insistence on the errors of Bentham; and his praise of Bentham on other points is certainly no warmer than his praise of Coleridge. Reading the strictures on Bentham, and feeling that in some respects they are well grounded, I cannot but feel also that in some highly essential qualities Bentham was nearer a scientific attitude or temper in morals than his critic. His science was incomplete; it could not but be, pioneer as he was, even if he had been more ready to learn from others; but he has a gift of dispassionateness which Mill never quite attains. Bentham was a most remarkable combination, as Mill justly points out, of a powerful moral inspiration with a faculty for the cool analysis of moral questions. All scientific history goes to show that moral science, to be sound, must be gone about in as passionless a temper as that of the chemist over his crucible. While you actively either love good or hate evil you may be doing the most valuable moral work, but you are not philosophising. Now, Mill is wonderfully philosophic in temper, compared with the average man; but his very enthusiasm of humanity kept him short of absolutely scientific method. Bentham again was indeed unscientific in the sense of leaving out whole classes of data in some of his reasonings—notably those on the treatment of criminals—but there is a fine colourlessness about his mental atmosphere, a fine north light, so to say, in his studio. And while Mill had been fitted by his training to appreciate this, you feel that on the other hand he had a certain temperamental readiness to do justice to the poetic colour in Coleridge's thinking, and to be tolerant of the mirage in which it so often ended.

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[1] In the syllabus of the lecture, and elsewhere.

III.

We must not lose sight, however, of the fact that Mill's virtue of receptivity kept him open to rational influences even after, on his first contact with the transcendentalist youth of his time, he partly reacted against his father's teaching. Some would have us believe that the father's Rationalism made his son's early life unhappy. Now, it is quite clear from the son's testimony, as well as from Professor Bain's biography, that James Mill, having married a pretty woman who could not give him intellectual companionship, fell into the failing, to which Scotchmen are perhaps especially prone, of being a strict and unsympathetic, though a conscientious, husband and father. Hence you find Christian apologists of the baser sort—the more numerous sort—pointing to his case as an illustration of the bad effect of scepticism on

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domestic life : a line of argument which moves one to wish that the apologist could just begin his own life again in a downright religious family of a type familiar to Scotchmen, and not unknown in England. But John Mill's boyhood, all the same, was not unhappy.

Mr. W. L. Courtney, who has written a somewhat capriciously critical "Life of Mill," quotes from the Autobiography the account of the young man's mental and physical prostration at one stage of his development, the stage in which he "seemed to have nothing left to live for." "This," says Mr. Courtney, "is the shipwreck of Rationalism, at least of that narrow and poverty-stricken Rationalism which was the boast of the eighteenth century."[1] For an anti-Rationalist, of course, any stick will do to beat Rationalism in general, and that of the eighteenth century in particular.[2] But one wonders that Mr. Courtney should take so little pains to be plausible. Does he think to persuade us that Irrationalists of all sorts have not passed through just such stages of mental prostration as young Mill did? Does he pretend either that the eighteenth century Rationalists, such as Hume, were, as a rule, miserable men, or that the subsequent transcendentalists, such as Maurice and Coleridge and Carlyle, were generally or continuously happy or confident men? He might, indeed, plead that Mill himself traces his depressions to purely mental causes. This is, as Professor Bain points out, one of the examples of Mill's slight hold on biology; he never allowed reasonably for physical conditions. When an overstrain of mental work broke down his elasticity he saw in the case a mere process or sequence of ideas, and so describes it in his Autobiography. But Mr. Courtney proceeds to misrepresent the case still further. He goes on to describe young Mill as meeting such men as Maurice and Sterling, and finding that they had "preserved their souls alive amid the arid fields of utility and selfishness," whatever that may mean.

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[1] *Life of Mill*, p. 57.

[2] "All that is worst in him," says Mr. Courtney later (p. 174) of Mill, "belongs to the eighteenth century, all that is best is akin to the highest, best spirit of the nineteenth." Thus can sociology be written.

The implication seems to be that Maurice and Sterling never were depressed. "They were not fond," says Mr. Courtney in his academic English, "of analytic habits." And then he goes on to represent Mill as if saying later, in his own person, that "Analytic habits are a perpetual worm at the root both of the passions and of the viritues." What are the facts? Mill in his Autobiography[1] tells how at that particular time of early depression he thought this about analytic habits; and immediately after he goes on to say that he never turned against the habit of analysis, but simply found that other kinds of cultivation required to be joined with it;[2] and that the delight which he found in reading Wordsworth proved to him that with poetic culture "there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habits of analysis."[3] And whereas Mr. Courtney relates[4] that Mill was led to the reading of Wordsworth in 1828, by contemplating the support which Maurice and Sterling found in Wordsworth and Coleridge, Mill himself tells us, first, that his state of dejection began to give way, in a very simple manner, two years before; and, secondly, that it was after reading Wordsworth and proclaiming his enjoyment at the Debating Society that Sterling was drawn to him, telling him that he and his friends had before thought Mill a "made" or manufactured man, stamped with certain opinions in his youth, but that he had been quite brought round by finding that Wordsworth "belonged" as much to Mill as to his own set.[5] These may seem small perversions, but they become serious when seen to be part of an attempt to discredit, by side winds, the philosophy in which Mill was trained. He tells us, indeed, that Maurice and Sterling helped him in his development—which is only what all young men of parts do for each other; but his own criticisms of them, especially of Maurice,[6] of whom he writes so much more perspicaciously and justly than Carlyle did, show that he went with them, as individuals, no great way.

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 138. [2] *Ib.* p. 143. [3] *Ib.* p. 148. [4] *Life*, pp. 59, 72.

[5] Mr. Courtney's biographical laxity is well seen in his two statements, within two pages, that it was Sterling who introduced Mill to the Fox family, and that it was Mill who introduced Sterling (pp. 70, 72).

[6] *Autobiography*, p. 153.

By Carlyle himself, again, Mill was certainly influenced.[1] One phrase he uses of Bentham—"His lot was cast in a generation of the leanest and barrenest men whom England has as yet produced, and he was an old man when a better race came in with the beginning of the present century"—smacks much of Carlyle. For Mill, it is sufficiently perverse. Bentham was a young man in the time of Burke, of Johnson, of Goldsmith, of Gibbon, of Hume, of Adam Smith, of Horne Tooke, of Sterne, of Smollett, of Cowper, of Burns, of Sheridan; and it may be doubted whether Mill's own early contemporaries were all round overwhelmingly superior to these. But if Mill was ready to talk so of the leanness and barrenness of Bentham's generation, we can understand why Carlyle found him at first "one of the clearest-headed and clearest-hearted young men now living in London."[2] We know how Carlyle regarded the school of Bentham, including at first both the elder and the younger Mill. He had written in his Journal that Bentham and "his Mills" and such people were "intrinsically wearisome, almost pitiable and pitiful. Logic is their sole foundation; no other even recognised as possible." That was as shallow as Carlyle's prejudices generally were. As John Mill well showed, Bentham pursued the career he did, just because his moral sensibilities were so much warmer, and his moral courage so much greater than those of his fellows. Bentham himself, in his early criticism of Blackstone, had pointed out how intimate is the connection between some of the gifts of the understanding and some of the affections of the heart; and had declared that, "In the errors of the understanding there can be little to excite, or at least to justify, resentment. That which alone, in a manner, calls for rigid censure, is the sinister bias of the affections." James Mill was no less, was even more, moved in his life's work by a pure moral enthusiasm; and who now will say that John Mill had not a more constant moral inspiration than Carlyle? But inasmuch as these moralists added logic to instinct, they must needs be wearisome to the intuitionist. When logic is against a man, he is naturally against logic. And Nemesis came into play as regards John Mill's early inclination towards Carlyle's views. As time went on the sage found Mill more and more "sawdustish," as the elder Sterling phrased it; and when the "Autobiography" appeared, that fascinating and luminous book, the aged Carlyle wrote of it with his usual wanton abusiveness:—"I have never read a more uninteresting book, nor, I should say, a sillier, by a man of sense, integrity, and seriousness of mind . . . . It is wholly the life of a logic-chopping engine . . . . Autobiography of a steam-engine."[1] It was in large part a story of ideas, and that sufficed to exasperate Carlyle.

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[1] But Mill thus describes the manner of the influence:—"Instead of my having been taught anything, in the first instance, by Carlyle, it was only in proportion as I came to see the same truths through media more suited to my mental constitution, that I recognised them in his writings. Then, indeed, the wonderful power with which he put them forth made a deep impression upon me, and I was during a long period one of his most fervent admirers; but the good his writings did me was not as philosophy to instruct, but as poetry to animate." *Autobiography*, p. 175.

[2] Letter to Hunt in Mr. Conway's *Thomas Carlyle*, p. 203. Cf. Froude's *London Life*, i., 25. Of course all this was changed later.

I have said that at one point his and Mill's ideals almost coincided. Both were opposed to Whiggism; both resented the neglect of popular interests by the ruling classes; John Mill was willing to see good in the mystics; and Carlyle, while he had been abusing "Bentham and his Mills," had unknowingly read some articles of John Mill's, and thought they came from "a new mystic."[2] But there was a rift within the lute, which slowly widened. Carlyle chose to decide that the Radicalism which he had formerly embraced consisted in calling on the most ignorant people to guide themselves. Mill, who never ceased to dwell on the dangers of popular error in politics, but who saw with his father that only the suffrage could save the people from being governed in the interests of the upper classes, remained a sane democrat, while Carlyle grew into a supporter of slavery, an absolutist, and a blind enemy of popular government. When the case of Governor Eyre came up, they were ranged on opposite

[1] Froude's *London Life*, ii., 420.

[2] Mill's *Autobiography*, p. 174.

sides; and it is a very interesting study to compare their separate accounts of the events in Jamaica, Mill briefly recounting the facts and Carlyle suppressing three-fourths of them in his partisanship of the man who had put down an insurrection. You would never learn from Carlyle's remarks that men and women had been flogged wholesale after the insurrection was over. In the American Civil War, while Carlyle threw his weight on the side of the South, Mill was one of the first public men in England to resist the prevailing evil sentiment and declare for the side of civilisation. Their ideals had become completely divergent; and when the "Liberty" appeared, Carlyle pronounced it a compendious statement of all he held not to be true in political matters.

On the other hand Carlyle certainly anticipated Mill, if not in sympathy with the workers, at least in seeing that their lot would never be made permanently happy by a system of universal industrial competition. Mill, indeed, saw and taught from the first, what Carlyle never saw, that the restraint of population was essential to the well-being of the masses; but in his "Principles of Political Economy," as we shall see, he also taught a doctrine quite inconsistent with that, arguing with elaborate futility that if only people would go on saving money for investment in sufficient quantity, there need never be any lack of employment. But if Mill thus erred precisely where his training and his method should have preserved him from error, he none the less continued to preserve a healthy sympathy with all forward movements; and there is no man of modern times who has been further from the pitfall of reaction on the score of his own miscalculations. It was never painful to him, says Professor Bain, to change an opinion when it could be shown to be false; and as he never clung vindictively to an error, so he never was led, by dissatisfaction with any phases of democratic development, to turn renegade to the great cause of freedom. Even when he injuriously narrowed his range of society, he seems never to have narrowed his general sympathies. To the last he was one of the most catholic of men.

IV.

Writing his Autobiography long after he had parted company with Carlyle, he speaks of his former friend with much generosity.

> "I did not deem myself," he says, "a competent judge of Carlyle. I felt he was a poet, and that I was not; that he was a man of intuition, which I was not; and that as such, he not only saw many things long before me, which I could only, when they were pointed out to me, hobble after and prove, but that it was highly probable he could see many things which were not visible to me even after they were pointed out. I knew that I could not see round him, and could never be certain that I saw over him; and I never presumed to judge him with any definiteness, until he was interpreted to me by one greatly the superior of us both—who was more a poet than he, and more a thinker than I—whose own mind and nature included his, and infinitely more."[1]

This remarkable person was, of course, the lady who ultimately became Mill's wife—the subject of some of the most extravagant panegyrics ever written on anybody by a contemporary and intimate. It is necessary to consider these deliverances in estimating Mill. If it had been of them that Carlyle wrote when he called the Autobiography silly, one could have understood his feeling. The two men compare rather remarkably in the extremely high tribute they have paid to their deceased wives; but though Mill had very much the advantage in his conduct as a husband, being not so much a *post mortem* enthusiast, he is distinctly the less convincing in his eulogy. Carlyle's tardy praise of his wife is in part certainly extravagant enough, but it is perfectly plain that Mrs. Carlyle was a woman of uncommon mental gifts; whereas Mill has represented his wife as one of the most remarkable minds that ever existed, without ever convincing any human being, I believe, that she was anything like what he said. Of all the persons I have ever talked with about Mill's account of his wife, not one has doubted that he was under a hallucination as to her powers. His own declarations force us to that conclusion.

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 176.

He tells us, as above, that Mrs. Mill included all Carlyle's gifts, and infinitely more, while far superior to her husband as a thinker; again,[1] that she equalled James Mill in her "power of influencing by mere force of mind and character the convictions and purposes of others, and in the strenuous exertion of that power to promote freedom and progress;" and yet again[2] that in thought and intellect Shelley was "but a child to what she ultimately became." And all this of a lady who, though admittedly brilliant and intellectual, has left on record no idea of any original importance, and who only published one composition, and that on the not very deep subject of the enfranchisement of women. If she had all the share in her husband's work for which he gave her credit, it would not establish a fraction of his panegyric; and it was rather fatuous of him not to see, among other things, that he was partly trying to enforce his inordinate praise of her by pointing to the merits of his own books. Claiming for her an influence as great as his father's over contemporary minds, he could not point to any mind but his own which had come under her sway. And he finally overthrows his own estimate in one of the strangest passages ever written by a really modest and sagacious man.

> "During the greater part of my literary life," he says,[3] "I have performed the office in relation to her, which from a rather early period I had considered as the most useful part that I was qualified to take in the domain of thought, that of an interpreter of original thinkers, and mediator between them and the public; for I had always a humble opinion of my own powers as an original thinker, *except in abstract science (logic, metaphysics, and the theoretic principles of political economy and politics)*, but thought myself much superior to most of my contemporaries in willingness and ability to learn from everybody."

The last claim is certainly well warranted; but did ever any man before make such a claim as the preceding one? "I am not much of an original thinker *except* in logic, metaphysics, and the theory of political economy and politics. Apart from these trifling

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 205. [2] *Ib.* p. 186. [3] *Ib.* p. 242.

matters, I am only an intellectual middleman." What shall we say of it? If Mill was an original thinker on all these matters he was a great philosopher, and his name and fame will endure. And beyond originality in these points, what have his works to show? Mrs. Mill, he admits, did not meddle with these subjects; she had no hand in the *Logic;* she died before he wrote the Examination of Hamilton, and can have contributed nothing to it; she suggested one chapter in the *Political Economy;* and she inspired the *Liberty* and the other late political treatises, not one of which has any claim to notable originality. It is idle to discuss further; we are in the presence of a hallucination; and when we find the philosopher going on to say that his wife "continually struck out truths far in advance of me, but in which I could not, as I had done in those others, detect any admixture of error,"[1] we are disposed hastily to drop the subject. The item that the lady could never err is the last straw.

How then does this phase of him affect our total estimate of Mill's character and faculties? Plainly he was weak on the side of emotional susceptibility to a personal influence. In his admiration of his friend and wife we have an extreme development of that plasticity which first let him take so deep an impress of his father's teaching, and later made him undergo so strongly the influence of another school. These two developments in a manner corrected each other; but the extravagance of the last and longest period of discipleship of all leaves us unable to doubt that his judgment when swayed by his sympathies could go far astray. It is a singular weakness to be combined with a faculty for abstract logic; but it consists very obviously with Mill's unquestionable infirmity in the application of logic to specific problems, alike in politics, economics, and philosophy. He reasoned in general well *in vacuo* on the abstract and technical matters which did not involve his sympathies; but in the concrete, though often right and reasonable, he is chronically untrustworthy. And it will perhaps be a sound generalisation to say that his very catholicity and openness of mind, so attractive in itself, was correlative with his unsureness in the reasoned settlement of single human problems. There he was always susceptible to instinctive pulls and pushes from his personal leanings and reluctances; and though his sympathies in practical affairs were always humane, and I think never disastrous, his logic is at times far to seek. We can sympathise with his early associates who, Professor Bain tells us, after reading his papers on Bentham and Coleridge, felt a "painful misgiving as to his adhering to their principles or to any principles."[1] They were substantially reassured later, but the misgiving was well grounded; and perhaps, after all, we have reason to be grateful to his wife for keeping Mill so right in the main. His most startling performance, the essay on Theism, was written after her death; and one vaguely feels that if he had married some one else things might have gone further. We cannot but think that his unlimited adoration of his wife's mind, and his entire absorption in her society, to the abandonment of intercourse that might and ought to have braced him in various ways, constituted an arrest of his intellectual growth; but we are not entitled to say that Mill's mind but for that one influence would have developed much further. We can but wish that the materials for a full biography, which his step-daughter is understood to possess, may ere long be turned to proper account. No better man has met the public eye in modern times; and few reputations can be less likely to suffer from a complete biography, now that the main facts of the life are known. The worst that is likely to be said, that he was regrettably ready to give up his own family in his devotion to his wife, and that to one of his brothers in ill health he showed unkindness—this has been said already.[2]

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[1] *Ib*. p. 243.

V.

One or two questions of expediency, finally, are raised by the survey of Mill's training and life. His education by his father is still justly deemed, as it was among those contemporaries who knew of it, a most remarkable experiment, though we now know, through Professor Bain, that James Mill was not performing such Herculean tasks in the way of literary labour while teaching his son, as the son afterwards supposed. The noteworthy thing was his success in giving the boy languages and moral science at an age at which the average boy at school has neither one nor the other, though in this case the pupil had a memory rather below than above the average. We are led to doubt, however, whether James Mill's system, while immediately successful, was ultimately advantageous. In giving the boy Greek and Latin and mathematics and logic and economics, and all the rest of it, was he fitting him in the best way for an intellectual life? James Mill, we know, shared the eighteenth century bias to the *à priori;* and we have the admission both of his biographer and of his son that in the matter of education he paid far more heed to abstract theory than to the lessons of practice. Powerful minds easily miscarry on this subject. The late Mr. Pattison has pointed out how completely wrong Milton was in his notion of education, as worked out in the teaching of his nephews.

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[1] *J. S. Mill*, p. 55.

[2] By Dr. Bain, as cited, pp. 95, 172.

"The subject of education," the critic observes, "is one which is always luring the innovator and the theorist. Everyone, as he grows up, becomes aware of time lost, and effort misapplied, in his own case. It is not unnatural to desire to save our children from a like waste of power."[1] In Milton's time in particular, schools and universities were in a bad state, and in his *Tractate of Education* he proposed reforms, which, says Mr. Pattison, "are ludicrously incommensurable with the evils to be remedied." He will not even stay to quote them, curtly remarking that "they are only a form of the well-known educational fallacy—the communication of useful knowledge."[2] "Milton saw strongly *(sic)* as many have done before and since, one weak point in the practice of the schools, namely, the small result of much time. He fell into the natural error of the inexperienced teacher, that of supposing that the remedy was the ingestion of much and diversified intelligible matter. It requires much observation of young minds to discover that the rapid inculcation of unassimilated information stupefies the faculties instead of training them. Is it fanciful to think that in Edward Phillips, who was always employing his superficial pen upon topics with which he snatched a fugitive acquaintance, we have a concrete example of the natural result of the Miltonic system of instruction?"[1]

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[1] *Milton*, p. 45.

[2] *Ib.* p. 48.

Now it cannot for a moment be pretended that John Mill was made a smatterer of this sort. He was a conscientious and laborious workman. Before reviewing Grote on Homer he re-read the whole of the Iliad and Odyssey in the original; and so also with his essay on Plato. James Mill might fairly claim that his plan had attained his ends: he taught his son to think, not stuffing him with ready-made information, but forcing him to acquire it by his own labour. But in making a child a classical scholar and a boy a logician, did he not strain the very bottom-fibres, as it were, of the faculty which he trained? We cannot say that he ruinously injured the boy's health, though that was shaken. John was by far the hardest taught of the family, and his constitution, despite seeds of disease, lasted where those of his brothers gave way. I have already dismissed the notion of his being made miserable by a training in rationalism, in view of the fact that the pleasure he found in Wordsworth was simply what thousands of supernaturalists found there, and that his youthful dejection was not a whit out of the common way. His father, he tells us, was untender in his early family life; but the boy's feelings were certainly not starved. What does suggest itself, however, is that, apart from his failure to take on any literary colour, so to speak, from his early classical studies, the faculty of abstract logic, which in John Mill was certainly exceptional, and which produced his most important work, never seemed to develop after that work was done; and that in so far as his later work consisted in applying that logic freshly to practical problems, he ceases to be a noteworthy thinker, and finally becomes almost a feeble one.

Was he then prematurely exhausted? His mind certainly continued to play energetically on many simply practical issues, and where he had to expound humane and liberal principles he did it with rare elevation and persuasiveness. But it is otherwise with his treatment of practical problems of which the solution has to be found in connected reasoning. His *Political Economy* has been declared by one of his most discriminating admirers to be "a ruin," and I do not think the phrase is an exaggeration. As for his final theology, it never had even a temporary acceptance among philosophical students. We naturally ask whether this apparent exhaustion of the higher mental faculties may not have been due to his spending of so many years of his life in official work? He himself has strongly insisted on the danger of trying to live by literature; saying truly enough that the career is one which greatly tempts men to do thin and showy work instead of producing books fit to live, which are not likely to be so popular. To his mind, an official position such as his own, with sufficient leisure, was the proper compromise. In point of fact, the great popularity of his own books has gone far to prove that he might have lived fairly on his gains from these; but in any case his plea for official occupation becomes sufficiently irrelevant when we learn that his own labours were so light that he was virtually able to write his two great books, the *Logic* and the *Political Economy*, during office hours.[1] Certainly there is much to be said for official occupation of that sort—from the point of view of the official.

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[1] *Milton*, p. 49.

Mill then was not exhausted by his official work, though his friend and critic, Professor Bain, seems to say so,[2] after telling us how easy the work was, and we are left to speculate as to whether the early and strenuous development of all his powers was not a cause of some of them being early arrested. Failing a conclusion on that head—and it is hardly possible to come to one—we must just say with Professor Bain that, as we actually find him, "He had an intellect for the abstract and the logical, out of all proportion to his hold of the concrete and the poetical." But the full force of this discrimination must be shown in detail; or rather perhaps I shall make out a proposition somewhat different from Dr. Bain's. Mill seems to me to have been singularly weak in his handling of a set of questions which some people would call abstract, namely, those discussed under the head of religion. I will call these concrete problems to be settled on logical principles; and my contention is that in handling them Mill's logical resources (so apparently wide when he discusses the forms and laws of logic)[1] seem to be of the slenderest description, the work being really done for the most part by his sympathies, feebly chaperoned, as it were, by a reasoning faculty grown elderly and languid, though remaining always conscientious. It is remarkable, indeed, how the habit of judicial reasoning clings to Mill under all circumstances.

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[1] Dr. Bain, as cited, p. 147.

[2] *J. S. Mill*, pp. 147-8. Of both father and son Professor Bain says that "By endeavouring to combine work for a livelihood with original research in philosophy, they brought upon themselves premature exhaustion, and vitiated their theories of life by shaping them under the perverting influence of shattered frames."

VI.

Take first his main line of reasoning on the subject of Theism. He makes a good show of treating judicially the doctrines of a First Cause, and of miracles, and of natural tendencies of belief; and duly shows that the ordinary First Cause argument destroys itself; that miracles are as good as incredible, philosophically speaking; and that natural tendencies of belief prove either nothing or too much. But not only does he introduce a flagrant fallacy in his partial defence of the theory of miracles, but he maintains continuously a position which is untenable from the very commencement of the argument—that, namely, of a good deity of limited powers. This notion had a strange attraction for him, since it is not merely elaborated in the essay on Theism but laid down in the previous essay on the Utility of Religion. There he says that

> "One only form of belief in the supernatural—one only theory respecting the origin and government of the universe—stands wholly clear both of in-

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[1] These powers seem undiminished so late as 1865, when he produced his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy.* The essay on Theism was written between 1868 and 1870.

tellectual contradiction and of moral obliquity. It is that which, resigning irrevocably the idea of an omnipotent creator, regards Nature and Life not as the expression throughout of the moral character and purpose of the Deity, but as the product of a struggle between contriving goodness and an intractable material, as was believed by Plato, or a Principle of Evil, as was the doctrine of the Manicheans. A creed like this, which I have known to be devoutly held by at least one cultivated and conscientious person of our own day, allows it to be believed that all the mass of evil which exists was undesigned by and exists not by the appointment of, but in spite of, the Being whom we are called upon to worship."[1]

Such a passage forcibly arouses that perplexity that is sometimes excited by exhibitions of glaring fallacy from thinkers who have specialised in logic. Jevons was another example; his Primer of Political Economy contains a fallacy that might be detected by a sharp schoolboy. And no reasoner of standing ever made a more obvious oversight than is here made by Mill in undertaking to set forth as an explanation or theory of the *origin* of the universe the doctrine of a deity of limited power, struggling with an intractable material. On the very face of the case, this is no theory of the origin of the universe at all, but one which sets the problem of origin aside; and just as little is it a theory of deity or the supernatural, since the very purpose of such a theory is to formulate the universe in terms of will and administration, while Mill's formula presents a subaltern God, the victim of circumstances, struggling with a universe which is too much for him, and either taking a hopelessly pessimistic view of it as a mystery he cannot make out, or figuring to himself in turn another and bigger superior God who is either incorrigibly bad or is in turn the victim of circumstances. That is what limited-liability Theism logically comes to. It is amazing that a man of philosophical training should have been capable of writing down such a childish restatement of one of the most naïve conceptions of antiquity. We are told that the essay on Theism had not been finally revised; but this passage occurs in an essay written long before; and the essay on Theism elaborates the proposition. It is the most futile suggestion towards a philosophy of the universe to be found in modern literature of the better class; and I can only account for its existence by Mill's own remark that "the scepticism of the understanding does not necessarily exclude the Theism of the imagination and feelings."[1] In this case the Theism of the feelings had got so far the upper hand that it claimed to sit in the chair of the understanding, declaring that its dream was "wholly clear of intellectual contradiction;" and the only demur that Mill's reason was able to murmur was that the "evidence" for the proposition of his feelings was "too shadowy and unsubstantial . . . . to admit of its being a permanent substitute for the religion of humanity."[2] Evidence, forsooth, for a contradiction in terms! Unsubstantial is not the word. And in the very act of making this nugatory admission, Mill proceeds to urge, as he urged at the close of the essay on Theism, that apart from all belief men should cherish religious hopes which were agreeable to them. Human life needs to be elevated by imagination, so you are to fancy there may be a future state while not believing there will be; and you are to imagine a God who cannot get his own way because you may then have the pleasing sensation that you are helping him.[3] In this way you will keep up your spirits without perverting your judgment; because "when imagination and reason receive each its appropriate culture they do not succeed in usurping each other's prerogatives."[4] Which reminds us of Dickens' remark that Mrs. Nickleby, sitting before him in her chair, denied that Mrs. Nickleby existed. According to Mill the appropriate culture of the imagination is to fancy that the reason may be mistaken. One is fain to remember his own remark that the subject of the proper means of culture for the imagination has not hitherto attracted the serious attention of philosophers. Certainly his view of the subject is the crudest and most primitive that could well be conceived, dividing as it does the imagination from the reason, as if there were no reason in imagination and no imagination in reason. He does say, indeed, that imagination is to "make life pleasant and lovely inside the castle, in reliance on the fortifications raised and maintained by reason round the out-ward bounds;"[1] but the whole effect of his argument is to prescribe to imagination a holiday on the loose, out of sight of the castle, every time, so to speak, that the horses are disengaged. Surely men are prone enough to put guess and inclination above science without being thus strangely encouraged to it in the name of science itself. Every purpose that Mill professed to have in view could be met by the cherishing of hopes of an ideal future for humanity in this world; and he gratuitously, nay, treasonably, gave away that motive power in the professed service of humanity.

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[1] *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 116.

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[1] *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 118. [2] p. 117. [3] p. 256 [4] p. 247.

And if he is illogical in his general scheme of philosophical culture for the feelings, he is worse than illogical, he is inexcusably heedless, in his treatment of the claims of the religion which in his own community professes both to train the feelings and inform the reason. His eulogy of the Jesus of the Gospels, and his unwarrantable and fallacious defence of the historic actuality of that figure, have been picked out of the mass of rhetorical empiricism that makes up the essay on Theism, and brandished in the faces of rationalists as a complete admission that Jesus lived and spoke as he is said to have done; that Jesus was perfect; that nobody else had such ideas; and that he really may have had a special message from God—for to this extremity of unreasoning hypothesis Mill actually proceeds, though for some unexplained reason he will not accept the doctrine of the Incarnation. The whole exposition is arbitrary and illogical to the last degree. Professing to argue the question whether Jesus existed, and to show that he must have done, Mill contends that this is clear because *nobody else could* have said the things he says in the synoptics. It is the most scandalous case of begging the question that I can remember. You ask: Is the teaching Jesus of the Gospels a true historical figure, or are not his professed teachings a compilation of many current at that and a later period? Answer, No: because we know that Jesus existed and taught such things, and nobody else was capable of inventing them. That is—the thing to be proved is taken for granted.

If Mill had ever paid the least critical attention to New

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[1] *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 249.

Testament criticism, however fallaciously he might continue to reason, he could scarcely have played fast and loose with the matter to the extent he did. But we know from Professor Bain, that "he scarcely ever read a theological book. . . He is not even well read in the sceptics that preceded him."[1] He has no notion of the application of analytic historical criticism to the records. He talks of "the fishermen of Galilee," as if he knew all about them; and it has apparently never struck him that Paul shows no sign of having ever heard of any teachings of Jesus whatever, save in the dubious matter of the Last Supper. He speaks generally of the life and sayings of Jesus as having a "stamp of personal originality combined with profundity of insight;" and he does not cite a single saying to exhibit that profundity. He pronounces the matter special to the Fourth Gospel to be "poor stuff," of which there was any amount to be had in the East; and he does not attempt in a single line to show where the sayings of the synoptics are more profound than those. In point of fact, it is the Fourth Gospel that above all has gone to build up the traditional conception of Jesus as a marvellous teacher; and it will continue to do so, and would do so even if such matters as the Sermon on the Mount had not been shown to be pre-Christian. The most independent of all the teachings attributed to Jesus (and even that cannot have been original) is that in the story of the woman taken in adultery, which occurs only in the Fourth Gospel, and which is now rejected by the Revisers as an interpolation, though ignorant Christians—and others—continue to lay stress on it as a proof of Jesus' moral exaltation. Mill, after alleging his profundity, without giving any example of it, calls him "probably the greatest moral reformer . . . who ever existed upon earth," when in point of fact there is not one valid moral doctrine attributed to Jesus which had not been laid down long before him, and when he not only passed over in absolute silence one of the worst social crimes of all ages, that of slavery, but is represented in the First Gospel as giving special endorsement to the evil doctrine of national exclusiveness, telling his disciples to enter not into any city of the Samaritans. And Mill himself had in the previous essay on the Utility of Religion pointed out that the Christ of the Gospels bases right action on the hope of a heavenly reward, and endorses the doctrine of hell punishment, which last Mill admits to be a drawback "of so flagrant a character as almost to outweigh all the beauty and benignity and moral greatness which so eminently distinguish the sayings and character of Christ."[1] At the end he seems to have got over this drawback.

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[1] As cited, p. 139.

VII.

Of these salient intellectual shortcomings we can only say that they give staggering proof of the laxity of Mill's mind in the application of his own logical principles to the discovery of truth in regard to the constitution of the universe and the history of religion. But if we are right in saying that these intellectual weaknesses were correlative with his sympathetic qualities, they finally serve to give us a more vivid idea of the strength of the element of benevolent feeling in his character. These unhappy reasonings on Theism, that headlong deliverance as to the character and actuality of the Jesus of the Gospels, were on this view partly the outcome of his wish to preserve for his fellows every possible comfort and consolation from their old religious beliefs, every vestige of their old devotions, that seemed tenable without injury to good morals. If he miscalculated on the last head, at least the aim was good. And at worst, even if we attribute his fallacy not wholly to pure altruism but partly to intellectual infirmity, hereditary or acquired, in himself, still no one who has studied him ever harboured a doubt as to his integrity in debate, or his readiness to listen to criticism when it came. Had he lived, the essay on Theism would certainly have been revised, if he had ever seen fit to publish it.

What is more to the purpose, we shall see, in dealing with his social doctrines, that though there too his inclinations and sympathies could warp his reasoning, they rarely led to his advancing an injurious doctrine, just because his desires were so essentially benevolent and his practical sympathies so just. For once that he reasoned to the detriment of right policy, he was ten times the advocate of right policy in the face of extreme discouragement; and the sympathies and aspirations which sometimes made his doctrines inconsistent were always potent to lead him past his inconsistencies to new doctrine and new beneficent activity. May we all have as fortunate an antidote to the errors of reasoning which, with possibly worse origins, we are at least sure to commit as he.

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[1] *Essay on Utility of Religion*, pp. 111-113.

VIII.

After what we have seen of Mill's way of thinking and reasoning about the matters of popular religious belief, there is nothing surprising in the fact that throughout his lifetime he kept silence in the main on those points in which he thought that belief irrational and immoral. Dr. Bain tells[1] of a conversational episode between Carlyle and Mill when he was in their company, in regard to the proclamation of heterodox opinions. The party were walking together, and Carlyle was "denouncing our religion and all its accessories. Mill struck in with the remark, 'Now, you are just the very man to tell the public your whole mind upon that subject.' This was not exactly what Carlyle fancied. He gave, with his peculiar grunt, the exclamation 'Ho,' and added, 'it is someone like Frederick the Great that should do that.'" Well, Frederick the Great did indicate his opinions on these subjects pretty freely, but Frederick's biographer, on that particular point, was rather more circumspect; and he seems to have been very frigid to Mr. Froude, at their first meeting, because that gentleman, then young and imperfectly Carlylean, had been publishing his views on religious subjects. When it came to speaking out on these matters, Carlyle shuffled his pack of principles, and for the trump card, "speak the truth," substituted that other, "burn your own smoke."

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[1] *J. S. Mill*, p. 191.

But why, one asks, did Mill practise the same reticence? He apparently cannot have felt on the subject in his youth, when he urged Carlyle to speak out, as he did in later life when he wrote the essay on Theism; but he never assailed religious unreason and immorality as he did the subjection of women and the restriction of freedom of thought in general; and even the essay on Theism, like those with which it is published, avows opinions thoroughly opposed to those of the majority. Apparently he thought that in his time it was still expedient to maintain silence, as it had been in his father's time. He tells in the Autobiography how thoroughly anti-religious were his father's opinions, and how they were imbibed by himself.

> "I am thus," he wrote, "one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has, not thrown off religious belief, but never had it: I grew up in a negative state with regard to it. I looked upon the modern exactly as I did upon the ancient religion, as something which in no way concerned me. It did not seem to me more strange that English people should believe what I did not, than that the men I read of in Herodotus should have done so. History had made the variety of opinions among mankind a fact familiar to me, and this was but a prolongation of that fact. This point in my early education had, however, incidentally one bad consequence deserving notice. In giving me an opinion contrary to that of the world, my father thought it necessary to give it as one which could not be prudently avowed to the world. This lesson of keeping my thoughts to myself at that early age was attended with some moral disadvantages; though my limited intercourse with strangers, especially such as were likely to speak to me on religion, prevented me from being placed in the alternative of avowal or hypocrisy."

Twice, he says, he discussed religious matters with other boys; so the moral disadvantages would seem to have attached to his later life. But he goes on:—

> "The great advance in liberty of discussion, which is one of the most important differences between the present time and that of my childhood, has greatly altered the moralities of this question; and I think that few men of my father's intellect and public spirit, holding with such intensity

> of moral conviction as he did, unpopular opinions on religion, or on any other of the great subjects of thought, would now either practise or inculcate the withholding of them from the world, unless in the cases, becoming fewer every day, in which frankness on these subjects would either risk the loss of means of subsistence, or would amount to exclusion from some sphere of usefulness peculiarly suitable to the capacities of the individual. On religion in particular the time appears to me to have come, when it is the duty of all who, being qualified in point of knowledge, have on mature consideration satisfied themselves that the current opinions are not only false but hurtful, to make their dissent known; at least, if they are among those whose station or reputation gives their opinion a chance of being attended to."

In the circumstances, one can hardly help wishing that Mill had seen that "the time had come" to speak out while he was still alive. The Autobiography, however, spoke for him immediately after his death; and there are not wanting evidences that even at his death pious malignity was zealous against him. The *Church Herald*, for instance, wrote as follows:—

> "Mr. J. Stuart Mill, who has just gone to his account, would have been a remarkable writer of English, if his innate self-consciousness and abounding self-confidence had not made him a notorious literary prig. . . . . His death is no loss to anybody, for he was a rank but amiable infidel, and a most dangerous person. The sooner those 'lights of thought' who agree with him go to the same place, the better it will be for both Church and State."[1]

At least it is a merit to have earned some men's hate. And however Mill may have hesitated to speak out on religious questions, he certainly never faltered on any other. His ethics, public and private, may betray error, but never conscious or wilful neglect of truth or justice. In regard to India, he defended the privileges of the East India Company against the determination of his countrymen to substitute a public and national for a private administration of that vast dependency; and one cannot but feel that his sympathies were here engaged with the Company by reason of his own official connection with it.

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[1] *Church Herald*, May 14, 1873, quoted by Mr. Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, p. 419.

It is difficult to conceive of an unbiased and scientific politician coming to the conclusion that India ought to be ruled by a commercial partnership. But on the other hand we are to remember that he knew how his father and he had been able to influence for good the action of the Company they served; and that he had reason to think he could continue to benefit the Indian peoples if its jurisdiction had remained. It was sufficiently unreasonable for him to write as he did in his Autobiography that the action of Parliament converted the administration of India "into a thing to be scrambled for by the second and third class of English parliamentary politicians," as if parliamentary politicians were less fit to deal with India than with England, and as if they were to be "classed" for any purposes below the members of the East India Company. But we have to remember on the other hand that he had at heart the interests of the people of India, and not merely those of his employers; and if he were alive to-day he might justly accuse the English people of having failed to realise and act upon the responsibilities they assumed towards India in 1858. As it happens, the outcome has justified his fears even in stultifying his expression of them. The harm has been done, not by parliamentary politicians "scrambling for" the administration of India, but by their leaving it as far as possible alone—leaving the Government of India to the bureaucracy which carries it on, and which it ought to be their first concern narrowly to supervise and control. That inveterate indifference of the English public and their representatives to the right government of a territory over which they claim rule and possession, will hasten the inevitable separation of India from the British commonwealth; just as a similar indifference, worsened by prejudice, has made inevitable the legislative separation of Ireland, and will one day make necessary the legislative separation of Scotland. But in the meantime it is interesting to remember that the interests of India were cared for in the British Parliament by one who was Mill's disciple, and are now being cared for by one[1] who, if not his disciple, differs from him only in being more of a rationalist than he. Mill's formal forecast was far enough astray, but the moral principle which moved him for India survives in his school.

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[1] This, alas ! no longer holds. There is now no "member for India."

Again, on one minor question of home politics he was at issue with the majority of his party—the question, namely, of the ballot, on which he first took the affirmative, and later the negative position. His wife, he mentions, preceded him in this change of opinion. I cannot see any principle that would justify him in denying to ordinary citizens the right to keep secret the direction of their vote, which would not call in question his own prudential reticence on religion. Whatever be the merits of his opinion, however, here again there can be no question that it was neither an illiberal prejudice nor a selfish ethic which guided him. He faced unpopularity on a point on which he had nothing to gain.

IX.

But these eccentricities, if we may call them so, in Mill's politics, raise the question how far that was a consistent system. There can be no question, at the outset, that it was scientific in cast and in tendency; that is to say, that it aimed at applying and embodying certain ethical principles, tested for political purposes by a study of actual history, if not actually arrived at by induction from such study. This systematic tendency he derived from his father and Bentham, but he would have said that, whereas they were unduly apriorist, he sought to modify their method by a study of the concrete. His essays on Coleridge and Bentham would seem to indicate that he was led to this modification by the influence of the former and his school. And yet it is not easy to see why he should not have got all his modifying ideas from Burke, who was the most eminent preacher of relativity in politics, so to speak, in modern England. Burke as a political thinker certainly does not finally stand the test: his arbitrary endorsement of some gross anomalies and injustices, after his brilliant vindication of humane principles, prove him to have lacked a permanent standard; and his treatment of the French Revolution shows him to have lost hold of all his better positions under the stress of an emotional revolt against a too rapid innovating movement. But Coleridge exhibited just the same weaknesses; and the fact remains that Burke's works preserve his wisdom for us to smelt out if we will. It would seem that, since for the Bentham group Burke finally represented sheer reactionism, he having in the end been identified with the worst Toryism; and since Benthamite politics was a democratic reaction against Burke and his allies, Mill set out with an antipathy to him; whereas Coleridge, coming freshly on the scene, had no difficulty in winning the young man's ear.

Now, there can be no doubt that James Mill's conception of the science of Government, formed as it had been, was in various ways imperfect. It professed to derive that science from the principles of human nature without taking sufficient pains to find out what those principles were. But still it was in large part scientific. His essay on Government is known to most readers of this generation from Macaulay's criticism of it, which is anything but a candid attempt to find what truth it contained. It is commonly forgotten,[1] though Macaulay's acrimony might suggest as much, that the Edinburgh Reviewer had to avenge the vigorous criticism passed on the general conduct of his organ a few years before by James Mill at the start of the *Westminster Review*. These exigencies, I believe, at times occur even in our own day; and as a journalist I do not feel wholly free to moralise on the subject. Macaulay had not simply to criticise an essay or a theory, but to heap ridicule on an entire school or party, which had made itself offensive to his own. And he had reason to abstain, as he did during his lifetime, from reprinting his three articles of controversy with the Utilitarians, not merely because of his tone towards James Mill, for which he afterwards fully apologised, but because his antagonists at various points convicted him of crooked tactics,[2] and pushed him awkwardly hard on his own positions, and oftener than not he could only reply by rudeness. On other hand, he certainly showed that James Mill had stated too absolutely certain propositions as to the tendencies of human nature;[1] and he showed on some points the difficulties of the "greatest happiness" principle. He further rebutted forcibly the unsound Benthamic assumption that miscalculation of chances is the explanation of all forms of misconduct, asserting against it the sound biological principle that men's propensities vary. John Mill, reading Macaulay, came to the conclusion that neither Macaulay nor his father were right, and that the truth lay between them. Here, however, he assumed that Macaulay had a theory; whereas Macaulay, on challenge, loudly affirmed that he had not, though he had said things which at least showed he had a belief.

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[1] John Mill seems to have overlooked this. See the *Autobiography*, p. 157.

[2] I cannot agree with Professor Bain (*James Mill*, p. 227) that the writer who first replied in the *Westminster* was "no match for Macaulay." The reply is on many points very effective; and Macaulay, in quoting

On this he has placed himself in a very amusing dilemma. If James Mill's principles were sound, Macaulay first said, the democratic form of Government which Mill recommended would work the ruin of the State. "But," he went on, "if these principles be *unsound*, if the reasonings by which we have opposed them be just, the higher and middling orders are the natural representatives of the human race."[2] Now, what Macaulay's argument clearly required was that if his own principles (not merely Mill's) were sound, universal suffrage would be ruinous, and middle class suffrage the right course. His proposition to the latter effect would really be of the same value whether Mill's principle were sound or not; but in any case he himself really dreaded universal suffrage, and yet he made his proposition as to its ruinous tendencies conditional on the soundness of his opponent's prin-

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passages of it, believing it was by Bentham, admitted that they were witty. And the second *Westminster* reply equally hits Macaulay at many points. Both are forcibly written.

[1] But James Mill pointed out in his *Fragment on Mackintosh*, in reply both to Mackintosh and Macaulay, that he had not sought to "explain the immense variety of political facts," but only "to show how a community could obtain the best security for good legislation." See Bain, p. 230.

[2] Review of Mill's *Essay on Government*, near end. *Wise Writings of Lord Macaulay*, ed. 1868, p. 146.

ciples, which he had just been denying. His "if" was a self-stultification. And yet this "if" was his only defence against the implication of making certain offensive charges against democracies; and when challenged on those charges (which his opposition to universal suffrage really required him to make), he had to fall back on his "if," and say that he only meant these things would happen if Mr. Mill's principles were sound. The obvious answer is that, as he himself declared they were not sound, he had shown no reason whatever for opposing universal suffrage, and was as good as committed to saying there was none, although he *did* oppose it. Errors of reasoning were fallen into on the other side, but none that could be compared to this, which virtually quashes Macaulay's case. Yet John Mill did not detect the collapse of the attack on his father.[1]

The truth was, Macaulay had no theory of government, properly so-called—no theory in the sense in which James Mill had one, save in so far as he held incompletely, one of James Mill's doctrines as an isolated prejudice; and John Mill did him too much credit in supposing that his quackish rhetoric about induction, and the Baconian system, meant a contention that government was purely a matter of experiment.[2] In the very act of opposing James Mill's apriorism, Macaulay himself was resisting democracy on the purely *a priori* principle that it was dangerous—for he did not pretend to prove from experience that it was. He was all the while really accepting, for that one purpose, James Mill's general principle, and drawing from it a conclusion which Mill would not like to face—namely, that a majority of "not-haves" would be sure, if they had power, to plunder the "haves."

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[1] Professor Bain too seems to have overlooked this central blunder in Macaulay's argument. That Macaulay was really expressing his own view, and not merely assuming for argument's sake an opponent's premises, when he pictured the results of universal suffrage, is made clear by his speech on the People's Charter in 1842, cited by Dr. Bain, p. 227. Macaulay there said he considered universal suffrage incompatible with civilisation.

[2] *Autobiography*, p. 160.

James Mill laid down his general premiss of class selfishness, and evaded that particular conclusion. Macaulay held that particular conclusion, but disavowed any general premiss.

X.

How then did John Mill modify his father's methods or principles? Did he correct the apriorism, as he said would be the proper course, by substituting for the deductive method of pure geometry the deductive method of the natural sciences? If he did, his results are oddly incongruous. James Mill, in seeking to discover how far the principle of universal suffrage might be limited without destroying the security for good government, suggested that men under the age of forty, and all women, might be excluded, on the score that their interests might be assumed to be the same as those of the men who would then be left to vote. Macaulay, passing over the point as to men under forty, pounced on the point as to women, and in the heat of argument made admissions [1] as to their position which went far to justify their enfranchisement, and which flatly contradict his own subsequent statement, that a "respectable Englishman's" interest may fairly be said to be identical with his wife's. John Mill, thoroughly accepting the principle of woman suffrage, while recognising that his father put men under forty in the same case as women, goes on to protest against the exclusion of women as an error no less serious than any against which the Essay was directed, *without* insisting that the exclusion of men under forty would be equally unjust. Of course he would not himself have argued for the exclusion of the men under forty; but we do find that he was always much more enthusiastic about woman suffrage than about adult suffrage. And here, it seems to me, he was simply turning his father's apriorism in support of what he sympathised with, while ultimately dealing with what he did not so much like partly on an *a posteriori* method, or at least on a quite different ethical principle. At first he was for adult suffrage, or at least for substantial democracy, with men and women equal. Later, he tells us, he and his wife were "much less democrats than I had been, because so long as education continues to be so wretchedly imperfect, we dreaded the ignorance, and especially the selfishness and brutality of the mass."[1] Now, the whole drift of their joint book on "The Subjection of Women" is to make out that not only uneducated but educated men were in the habit of acting selfishly by their womankind, and oppressing them. Would educated men then be less likely in general to oppress uneducated men politically? James Mill said they *would* tend to oppress, and that therefore the mass should have the vote: John Mill, though he did not actually propose to restrict the vote, feared to give it. Why then was he so willing to give it to the women of the middle and upper classes? On his principle of looking to experience for a check to *a priori* speculation, he ought at least to have hesitated, for we had then no experience as to how women would use the vote; and his cases of good queens, in Europe and India, clearly proved nothing on this head. Besides, he strongly contended that women in general were in the position of slaves. Now, if it is dangerous to enfranchise an ignorant democracy, surely it must be dangerous to enfranchise slaves.

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[1] Review cited, near middle (p. 142).

I am not arguing against woman suffrage: I advocate it to the fullest extent, including it in adult suffrage. I am simply trying to show that Mill supported woman suffrage on certain *a priori* moral principles, because his sympathies went that way, while he shrank from applying the same principles where his sympathies did not happen to be quite so strong. In regard to women he strongly argued that we and they cannot possibly know what their characters and capacities really are until we give them a full opportunity of developing them. Quite so; and the same holds good of the unenfranchised masses of to-day. Their enfranchisement is the best security for their education, not only because, to use George Eliot's fine saying, "Those who trust us, educate us," in a political sense, but because everybody feels the need of improving education when all are voters. As for the women of all classes, they run just as much risk of going wrong, taking one propensity with another, as the men of all classes; and to give upper-class women, by means of the franchise, the power of controlling the destinies of unenfranchised lower-class men, would be simply to create one more anomaly, and one which, on Mill's own *a priori* principles, we are entitled to call iniquitous. For women after all are sinners, even as men.

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[1] *Autobiography*, p. 231.

But here again Mill's hesitation about democracy, inconsistent though it be, is a very different thing from the reluctance of the average Whig, not to say the Tory. In the passage from which I last quoted, he goes on to say:

> "Our ideal of ultimate improvement went far beyond Democracy, and would class us decidedly under the general designation of Socialists. While we repudiated with the greatest energy that tyranny of society over the individual which most socialistic systems are supposed to involve, we yet looked forward to a time when society will no longer be divided into the idle and the industrious; when the rule that they who do not work shall not eat, will be applied not to paupers only, but impartially to all; when the division of the produce of labour, instead of depending, as in so great a degree it now does, on the accident of birth, will be made by concert on an acknowledged principle of justice; and when it will no longer either be, or be thought to be, impossible for human beings to exert themselves strenuously in procuring benefits which are not to be exclusively their own, but to be shared with the society they belong to."[1]

They did not presume to suppose, he goes on to say, how these conditions could best be attained, or how soon; and they saw clearly that to make the transformation "either possible or desirable, an equivalent change of character must take place both in the uncultivated herd who now compose the labouring masses, and in the immense majority of their employers;" and towards this end he and his wife "welcomed with the greatest pleasure and interest all socialistic experiments by select individuals (such as the Co-operative Societies)." That is the gist of Mill's Socialism, as summed up in the Autobiography; and when he mentions that in the Political Economy "these opinions are promulgated, less clearly and fully in the first edition, rather more so in the second, and quite unequivocally in the third," we are forced to conclude that his thoughts on the subject were to the last in a perplexed state. The posthumously published "Chapters on Socialism" certainly leave them tentative.

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[1] *Autobiography*, pp. 231-2.

XI.

I have said that the "Political Economy" has been justly pronounced a ruin, a result which consists not ill with Mill's own avowal that it was "far more rapidly executed than the 'Logic,' or indeed than anything of importance which I had previously written."[1] Before his death, he abandoned one of his essential positions, the Wage Fund theory, but he seems to have been unaware how much of his system fell with it, and in particular how it was the key-stone of the arch of his general doctrine of Capital. Nay, his pupils and successors seem equally to have failed to see it, so that to this day Smith's and Mill's doctrine of the absolute beneficence of parsimony remains the accepted basis of national economics; and even leading Socialists are found taking up their ground on it. Smith, giving voice to the instincts, so far as they had taken argumentative shape, of the rising middle class of his day, taught that every spendthrift did an injury not only to himself, but to the commonwealth. When he went about to prove this doctrine in detail from the facts of society, he arrived at results which were totally inconsistent with his proposition; and in his unsystematic way he presented these results, in the admission that many forms of individual extravagance were beneficial to the community; but he still left his original proposition as it stood. Further, while asserting the complementary proposition that the parsimony of individuals was the source of national prosperity, and thus counselling all members of the community to consume as little as possible, he sought to buttress his inconsistent desire that production should be increased as much as possible, by the utterly incongruous maxim that there is no limit to human desires, and that, therefore, there need be no limit to production.

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[1] *Autobiography*, p. 235.

It is a perpetual see-saw of fallacy. You are to consume as little as possible, and save your money, because such saving is the only way to provide the indispensable capital for production; but at the same time we want to multiply production to the utmost for the good of trade; and we reassure ourselves by the reflection that there is no limit to consumption—just after we have been preaching that national prosperity depends on our placing a limit as strictly as possible in our own case.

That fallacy of Smith's was more or less clearly exposed by Lauderdale, by Sismondi, by Wakefield, by Chalmers, and by Malthus, but just because it went in so completely with the habits and inclinations of the middle and upper class majority, it has remained a part of orthodox economics to this day; and to Mill belongs the discredit of giving it new currency and prestige by his deplorable chapter entitled "Fundamental Propositions on Capital," a tissue of bare-faced fallacy which has gone far to reduce political economy to the level of religion. Happily the blunder is being detected by an increasing number of students. I cannot here go into the argument in detail. I propose to do that elsewhere; but I will sum up Mill's contentions. Holding generally with Smith as to parsimony and capital, he undertakes to show that capital is the result of saving, a proposition which he immediately reduces to utter insignificance by saying that you may call saving the production of things in excess of consumption, even if it be "concurrently with an increase of personal consumption." The proposition "Capital is the result of saving" is thus changed to "Capital is made by making." That being so, he will show that "if there are human beings capable of work, and food to feed them, they may always be employed in producing something." How? By all persons who have money to spare deciding not to go into the market and buy commodities of any sort with it, but to employ labour directly in the making of commodities for which there is no demand! It sounds incredible when you summarise it; but such is the argument. You are not to purchase commodities, because, says Mill, "demand for commodities is not demand for labour"—a bankrupt sophism which you shall find gravely expounded by his successors, and agreeably illustrated in a tale for the young by Mrs. Fawcett. What you are to do is, for preference, to go into the labour market and hire men directly to build a house for you. You are not to go to a builder and ask him to make you a house, for that would be demanding a commodity, and that is not a demand for labour, and so would do no good. But if you employ the bricklayers yourself you are a benefactor to your species. And when that house is built, you will best continue to be such a benefactor by proceeding to build another, without the slightest regard to whether the first house sells; because if any one offered to buy it he would be demanding commodities and not labour, and you must not let a demand for commodities lead you to employ labour, for does not the formula say that it cannot?

Such is Mill's deliberately expounded plan for keeping men employed so long as there is food to feed them. No doubt, if adopted, it would secure the end in view—so long as there was food. With every man employing labour at first hand with all his spare cash, labour would be fed while there was the wherewithal. Art and civilisation would be at a discount, but it would be a fine time for the bricklayers. If, however, you turn to Mill's subsequent chapter entitled "Popular Remedies for Low Wages," you find this statement:

> "It would be possible for the State to guarantee employment at ample wages to all who are born. But if it does this, it is bound in self-protection, and for the sake of every purpose for which Government exists, to provide that no person shall be born without its consent."[1]

Now, it is perfectly clear that Mill's scheme of employing labour at first hand with everybody's available "savings," (a scheme which, as he says, would give work and food to all while food existed), is tantamount to "guaranteeing employment at ample wages to all who are born;" and therefore that scheme would, on his own later showing, only be workable on condition that the community as a whole should control the numbers born. Yet he does not say a word of this condition in his chapter on "Fundamental Propositions on Capital," and he uses language which excludes it. And all the while the line of action he proposes is not only a flat defiance of common sense, but a negation of all the principles of commercial industry which he assumes and expounds throughout his book. I well remember the profound discouragement which for a time fell upon me when I perceived the utter nullity of these reasonings of a man standing in the first rank alike of economists and of logicians. But, meaningless as the chapter is, it has somehow served to keep up the prestige of Smith's inconsistent doctrine of saving, which Mill professed to be establishing,[1] while he was in reality proceeding by a succession of logical fatuities to the absolutely contrary doctrine that the well-being of the community is to be maintained by *unproductive consumption all round*—for that is the definition, on his own premises, of the process of benevolently employing labour which he set forth.

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[1] P. 220.

And when the first or Smithian part of the argument is finished, when he has done proving that "saving enriches and spending impoverishes the community along with the individual," he adds a footnote [2] stating, very much as Smith did, that it is "worth while to direct attention to several circumstances which to a certain extent diminish the detriment caused to the general wealth by the prodigality of individuals." He might well say that, when he was actually proceeding to exhort everybody to turn spendthrifts, and hire men to build houses they did not need. After showing scantily and contradictorily enough how expenditure may benefit the community, he ends the note by saying that "There are yet other and more recondite ways in which the profusion of some may bring about its compensation in the extra savings of others; but these can only be considered in that part of the Fourth Book which treats of the limiting principle to the accumulation of capital"—a limiting principle, observe, of which there has in the present chapter been no hint, and which it implicitly negates. The Fourth Book is near the other end of the volume: this is near the beginning. We turn to the Fourth Book and find Mill remarking that in regard to the accumulation of capital

[1] P. 45. [2] Pp. 45-6.

Adam Smith's language is "wavering and unsteady, denoting the absence of a definite and well-digested opinion."[1] Quite so; and we need go no further, for it is clear that Adam Smith's successor is in the same position, with distinctly less excuse.

But the explanation of Mill's confusions is not far to seek. He set out, like Adam Smith, inspired by the optimism of Free Trade. The first generations of that school were so impressed by the manifold evil which has been wrought by trade restrictions that it seemed to them as if the removal of these must be all that humanity could ever need. They could not bear to believe that there were tendencies to disaster in the freest action of an industrial community; and, practically speaking, it was well that they had that faith, which, relatively to the conditions of the time, was rational enough. Even, however, when the demonstration of Malthus clearly established the presence of this principle of disaster in all unregulated industry, the Free Trading Radicals failed to act on the demonstration, while admitting its soundness. Whether it was that the stress of opposition to freedom kept their minds controversially fixed chiefly on the gains it would involve, or that they were moved to resist those Tory Malthusians of the early days who opposed all reforms and defended all abuses, certain it is that few or none of them, save in abstract economics, kept the fundamental truth constantly before them. We have seen that John Mill himself, in the book in which he distinctly laid down the Malthusian principle, wrote chapters and sections which not only ignored but virtually negated it. After all, we can hardly wonder. If they kept the population principle consistently and continuously in the front, they would find every admission seized upon by men who sought to maintain all standing injustices on the score that justice could not secure well-being.

And in this connection we have to remember that, with all his economic inconsistencies, Mill was the first Liberal economist who distinctly insisted on the necessity of controlling population while urging liberal reforms. Malthus, profoundly impressed by the truth he had enunciated, and seeing no way of restraining population save by postponing marriage, was opposed to Corn Law repeal, which he saw would greatly stimulate increase. Ricardo and James Mill forcibly set forth the tendency of population to increase faster than subsistence—or, as James Mill put it, faster than capital, for he too held the doctrine of saving and the wage fund—but they went no further. M'Culloch, an optimistic Deist, brazenly made out that the law of population was like all others a beneficent arrangement of Providence, since but for constant pressure on subsistence "society would gradually sink into apathy and languor."[1] The perpetual massacre was serenely ignored in this creed. It was left for John Mill, among leading economists, to insist repeatedly, if not connectedly, that population might be restrained by human prudence. I remember a story, which I cannot now trace, of his attempting in his youth to spread Neo-Malthusian knowledge among servant-girls. If he had done so it would have been to his honour, and not to his discredit, as some seemed to think, but the story is unlikely. He freely used his influence on the subject, however, in his books; and in insisting on this all-important truth he made amends for many fallacies. And if it be, as Mr. Morley says, the glory of Carlyle to have recognised that we are living in a period of crisis, equally must it be the glory of Mill, who in the long run saw the facts more completely, and presented them more sanely.

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[1] P. 440.

XII.

And, indeed, save in so far as he encouraged the old delusion about individual parsimony being a source of national prosperity, and reinforced unreason in matters of religion, Mill's fallacies were not of a kind to lead men into harm. Even on the point of religion, indeed, it may be said for him that he did much more for reason than he wrought against it. Mr. Morley has claimed for him that, without openly assailing theology, he had done more than any other writer to cut at the root of the theological spirit.[2]

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[1] *Principles of Pol. Econ.*, 2nd ed., p. 228.

Critical Miscellanies, iii., 43.—*The Death of Mr. Mill.*

When Mr. Morley wrote, the "Three Essays" had not appeared. But the Liberty had already done in part what the Essays did afterwards—encouraged many religionists to remain in the religious way of thinking. It is true that those whom Mill had trained to think rationally by his "Logic" and his "Examination of Hamilton" would seldom be thrown back by his Essays; and there must have been many such. But on the other hand readers coming fresh to the Essays had the strongest encouragement to remain in their beliefs when they found a reputed sceptic coming so near orthodoxy and employing such eminently orthodox devices of argument.[1] We must just balance the loss against the gain; and we may reckon the balance to be decidedly on the right side.

A good deal has been said of the effect of one passage in his "Political Economy," that which allows that Protectionism may be on the whole the best policy for a young colony. It is told of Cobden that when on his deathbed he solemnly declared his belief that one passage had done more harm than all the rest of the book had done good. Now, it was the defect of Cobden, in other respects so admirable and enlightened a statesman, and so far in advance of contemporary politicians, that he did not accurately or sensitively measure the evils bound up with his own commercial theory. In his prime he was eminently one of the Free Trade optimists. He could see all the abstract evils arising out of a corrupt development of the protective system in the colonies, but he was less perceptive on the side of the evils co-existing with Free Trade at home, save in so far as he could trace them—and he could do that to a considerable extent—to a wasteful and militarist Government. Not that, as some people think, Cobden was finally satisfied with the way English civilisation went under Free Trade. His biographer has recorded that "the perpetual chagrin of his life was the obstinate refusal of those on whom he had helped to shower wealth and plenty, to hear what he had to say on the social ideals to which their wealth should lead. At last he was obliged to say to himself, as he wrote to a friend: 'Nations have not yet learnt to bear prosperity, liberty, and peace. They will learn it in a higher state of civilisation. We think we are the models for posterity, when we are little better than beacons to help it to avoid the rocks and quicksands.'"[1] There is, indeed, little of Manchester optimism there. But the fact remains that his career as a publicist reveals little of this feeling as compared with his satisfaction in industrial development; and either the deathbed story is false—which deathbed stories certainly very often are—or his last thoughts of all were determined by his early theoretic faith. However that may be, the reproach against Mill has been endorsed by others on the Free Trade side, and it calls for rebuttal. It is surely idle to say that the actual harm done by protection in our colonies is thus far anything like as grievous as the suffering at home resulting from the increase of population. Cobden, with his commercial optimism, seems to have failed to grasp that principle. It consisted with that failure that he should not see the sociological arguments for Mill's concession of protectionism to young colonies. The pure Free Trade argument is that every territory should produce what it can produce advantageously under Free Trade conditions, and aim at nothing more. That is to say, if Canada can most advantageously produce timber and wheat, can raise these at a profit in free exchange, while unable to produce other goods at a profit under the same conditions, she should be content to raise timber and wheat only, and to have in perpetuity a population consisting almost wholly of farmers and foresters. Now, that problem really has to be settled by principles outside of political economy, which Cobden ignored. If the farmers and foresters of Canada decide that they will make their civilisation more complex, that they will make certain sacrifices in order to set up among them variety of handicraft and art, holding that such variety is essential to general progress, they are so far reasoning not foolishly but wisely. I am not saying that protection in young communities has in practice been enforced on enlightened,[2] or even on honest

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[1] Mr. Courtney, however, repudiates Mill's half-and-half method as emphatically as any Rationalist could. (*Life*, p. 173.)

[1] *Life of Cobden*, by Mr. John Morley, ii., 481.

[2] Canadians in particular have gone far to ruin themselves as traders by

principles; it certainly involves grave evils, the most obvious of which is the obstinate rooting of sinister interests after the initial gain is quite secure; but, on the other hand, it has involved some gains to civilisation, while Free Trade, along with its great gains, has fostered desperate evils. Mill's counsel was rational and scientific, and represents one of his fortunate applications of biological method to a problem which others were treating as a mechanical one.

In other cases, he seems to have adhered to the unbiological method of dealing with a problem which is essentially biological, or rather sociological. His opposition to the suppression of capital punishment I can only explain as an adherence to Bentham's *a priori* methods of reasoning on the deterrent effects of penalties. Positive study of penal matters shows that *a priori* calculation of deterrents is always wrong; and that, for instance, there was more sheep-stealing when men were hanged for it by dozens than to-day when it is slightly punished. In the same way murder does not increase in the ratio of non-capital sentences, and we are faced by the consideration that we may safely abandon an odiously brutal and brutalising practice, which clearly demoralises and degrades men's sensibilities. But not only is Mill thus confuted: he is put out of court by an ethical principle which I believe he would not have disputed if it had been urged upon him. Capital punishment practically means the hiring of executioners to perform an act that is in itself regarded with loathing by all civilised citizens, so much so that the hangman's office is always treated as putting him beyond the pale of ordinary communion. In carrying out the judge's sentence he ought to rank as a public servant equally reputable with the judge; but he does not; and when lately it was proposed in Parliament to control his walk and conversation, it came out that no official would consent to do so. The reason is simply that his function is felt to be hateful. And yet the public who loathe it, and who would in-

maintaining tariffs against everybody, while the United States had tariffs against them. And corrupt interests have in their case clearly predominated.

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dividually recoil with horror from its performance, continue through their representatives to employ him. Mill might safely be defied to justify such a proceeding on moral grounds.

In another dispute with philanthropists, his position is, I think, more defensible. In Parliament he argued and voted against Cobden and other Liberals who sought to neutralise all the merchandise of belligerent powers in time of war. He argued that the best way to make an end of war was to let citizens feel all its evils; that to remove one of the most pressing of these would be to make them indifferent to the state of war. Mr. Morley holds with Cobden that in any case war is not likely to be put an end to, and that we should in the meantime mitigate all its evils as much as possible. Probably the question is unpractical, for it is difficult to conceive of nations in general binding themselves to leave alone each other's commerce when they are in a death struggle; but in any case there is much to be said for Mill's position.

XIII.

Others of his opinions, again, which must be pronounced fallacious, did little, if anything, of harm in social science. Professor Bain, his most competent critic, is emphatic on the error of his doctrine as to the natural equality of men's powers.[1] "He inherited the mistake," says Dr. Bain, "from his father, and could neither learn nor unlearn, in regard to it." It consisted with this that he never properly recognised the physical conditions of mental life: "he did not allow what every competent physiologist would now affirm to be the facts. I am afraid," adds Dr. Bain, "that on both these errors his feelings operated in giving his mind a bias." This seems the more probable when we note how, in his early essay on Bentham, in his mood of reaction he charges his former master with a disregard of human nature:—

> "That which alone causes any material interests to exist," he then wrote, "which alone enables any body of human beings to exist as a

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[1] Work cited, p. 146.

society, is national character: that it is which causes one nation to succeed in what it attempts, another to fail; one nation to understand and aspire to elevated things, another to grovel in mean ones; which makes the greatness of one nation lasting, and dooms another to early and rapid decay. The true teacher of the fitting social arrangements for England, France, or America, is the one who can point out how the English, French or American character can be improved, and how it came to be made what it is. A philosophy of laws and institutions, not founded on a philosophy of national character, is an absurdity."[1]

This rather bad mixture of Carlyle and Coleridge is a very inconclusive opposition to the method of Bentham, but it seems at least to recognise that character varies. In the "Logic"[2] he suggests a "Political Ethology, or the theory of the *causes which determine* the type of character belonging to a people or to an age." Already he is inconsistent, and his new term falls to the ground between the two stools on which he seeks to rest it. Later on, in the Political Economy, we find him returning to the best spirit of Benthamism in a repudiation of the English habit of attributing the poverty of Ireland, really caused by bad institutions and alien rule, to an indolence in the Celtic race. "Of all vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of moral and social influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences."[3] This is eminently just, while sufficiently inconsistent with the attack on Bentham, which either alleged natural differences or nothing. But he carried his second reaction to the extent of habitually writing as if all differences in capacity were due to education;[4] and here, especially when we read the essay on the "Subjection of Women," it is difficult to doubt that his especial zeal for women's emancipation disposed him to treat intellectual differences as always acquired and never constitutional.

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[1] *Dissertations and Discussions*, i., 365-6.

[2] B. vi., c. 9, § 4.

[3] B. ii., ch. ix, § 3. Cf. *Autobiography*, p. 274.

[4] Though he hardly adhered to that view in his famous generalisation as to the "stupid party," which was, not that Conservatives are stupid, but that stupid people are generally Conservatives.

And yet, when all is said, this error of his can have done little if any social harm, while he may have done much good in combating the contrary and vulgar error which he pinned down in the case of English treatment of Ireland, and which is still one of the stock platitudes of what he called the stupid party. Dr. Bain says his error as to the physical conditions of mind was "practically injurious;" but the reference here must be to Mill's own health. Doubtless that suffered, but he did not add to other men's burdens. And we come to a similar conclusion in regard to the fallacies we find in the foundation and in the exposition of his version of the principle of Utilitarianism. I think him historically and psychologically wrong in his position that the idea of justice arose out of the notion of conformity to law [1]—a position which indeed he himself contradicts later in the "Subjection of Women," in the statement that "Laws and systems of polity always begin by recognising the relations they find already existing between individuals."[2] It is obvious enough that the idea of justice begins in the instincts of animals. But we do not find that this fallacy of Mill's ever injured the cause of practical ethics. And on the other hand, how shall we overrate the influence of his practical utilitarian teaching for good? Who shall say how much it has contributed to the cultivation of rational moral science, and to its spread even in anti-rational regions? It has been well said by Professor Minto that the main service of his "Logic" is not so much to effect his original technical purpose as to bring the principles of proof accepted in physical science to bear on human affairs; and that service is not affected by his technical fallacies, or even by his failures to apply his own principle in practice. Against such failures, balance his advances on all the ethic of his time. Ignorant people think of his Utilitarianism as a system that produces Gradgrinds, and exiles beauty from life. What are the facts? Both father and son were peculiarly concerned to preserve the beauties of English scenery from injury through the indifference of railway projectors; and John Mill was one of the first writers to make an effective public protest on the subject.[1] What Mr. Ruskin has done latterly, he sought to do in his day. James Mill, too, expressly impeached the English civilisation of his time for its starvation of the arts.[2]

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[1] *Utilitarianism*, p. 70.

[2] *Subjection of Women*, 2nd ed., p. 8.

On the son's action as a public man, again, we have the most emphatic testimony from the most authoritative sources. While he was in Parliament the Speaker said, we are told, that he raised the tone of debate. But Mr. Gladstone has clothed that official tribute with a warmer than official utterance.

> "We well knew," says the veteran statesman, "Mr. Mill's intellectual eminence before he entered Parliament. What his conduct there principally disclosed, at least to me, was his singular moral elevation. I remember now that at the time, more than twenty years back, I used familiarly to call him the Saint of Rationalism, a phrase roughly and partially expressing what I now mean. Of all the motives, stings, and stimulants that reach men through their egoism in Parliament, no part could move or even touch him. . . . For the sake of the House of Commons at large, I rejoiced in his advent, and deplored his disappearance. He did us all good. In whatever party, whatever form of opinion, I sorrowfully confess that such men are rare."[3]

That is the testimony of one who on many grave matters thought far otherwise than Mill, and who is not latterly inclined to be enthusiastic about the "saintly" possibilities of rationalism. It is the more convincing and conclusive; and it combines, as the same voice has at other times been able to combine, the feelings of the different camps among the armies of progress. In all directions has Mill's influence been felt for good. "No calculus," says his friend Bain, rising into something of grave poetry in his closing tribute, "no calculus can integrate the innumerable little pulses of knowledge and of thought that he has made to vibrate in the minds of his generation." And I would add that, if his more toilsome labours were swept aside, if his repute among trained thinkers were in some measure to dwindle away,[1] he would still have deserved from his race a gratitude such as they give to those who mark out for humanity the upward and warn against the downward path, by the new eloquence and the new wisdom

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[1] Bain, *J. S. Mill*, pp. 152-3.

[2] Bain, *James Mill*, p. 399.

Mr. Courtney's *Life*, pp. 141-2.

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[1] I have not attempted in this general study to criticise Mill's *Logic*, though that is of all his works the one to the making of which there went the greatest amount of brain work. It stands to reason that, despite his admitted gift for abstract logic, a thinker who was capable of the errors above discussed must fall into some fallacies in a survey of the whole field of logic; and to attempt to handle all of these would have made my lectures very ill-suited for a general audience. I am fain, however, to supplement them with an extract from Professor Minto's excellent article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which gives at once a most impartial and a most compendious view of Mill's strength and weakness as a technical logician, and which is in many ways more instructive than the essentially partisan criticism of Mr. W. L. Courtney—at present perhaps the most widely circulated among "general readers":—

"Epoch-making as his *Logic* undoubtedly was, from the multitude of new views opened up, from the addition of a new wing to the rambling old building, and from the inspiring force with which every dusty chamber was searched into and illuminated, Mill did not escape all the innumerable pitfalls of language that beset the pioneer in such a subject. It is evident from a study of his purposes and the books from which he started, that his worse perplexities were due to his determination to exhibit scientific method as the complement of scholastic logic. In his defence of the syllogism he confounds the syllogistic forms with deductive reasoning. Every deductive reasoning may be thrown into the forms of syllogism, but not every syllogism is deductive. The reasoning in several of the syllogistic forms is not deductive at all in the sense of involving a movement from general to particular. Although he knew Aristotle in the original, Mill did not recognise the fact that the syllogistic machinery was primarily constructed for the reasoning together of terms. As regards the word induction, Mill uses it in different connections to cover three or four distinguishable meanings—induction viewed as the establishment of predications about a general term; induction viewed as inference from the known to the unknown; induction viewed as verification by experiment, and induction viewed as the proof of propositions of causation. The form of his system was really governed by the scholastic notion of induction as a means of establishing general propositions; the inductive part of his system is introduced after the deductive under this character; while the greater portion of the substance of what he treats of under the name of induction, and especially the so-called experimental methods, have nothing whatever to do with the establishment of general propositions, in the technical sense of general propositions.

"But the permanent value and influence of Mill's inductive logic is not with which he preached to his fellows a doctrine that is ever being venomously assailed and too often being sullied, but which thus far by his help stands safer than ever before, alike from enmity and disgrace—the doctrine that the good of mankind is a dream if it is not to be secured by preserving for all men the possible maximum of liberty of action and of freedom of thought.

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to be measured by technical inaccuracies and inconsistencies, to which an academic mind may easily attach undue importance. In the technical history of the science, Mill's *Logic* may be viewed as an attempt to fuse the practical tests of truth set forth in Herschel's *Discourse on Natural Philosophy* with the theoretic views of induction propounded in Whately's *Logic*. But in the history of thought the great importance of the work is due not so much to its endeavour to formulate the methods of science, and lay bare the first principles on which they rest, as to its systematic application of scientific method to what he called the moral sciences. Mill has often been criticised as if he had pretended to teach men how to conduct their investigations and how to make discoveries in the physical sciences. His work was rather to educe from the practice of men of science the principles on which they proceed in testing and proving their speculations concerning cause and effect in the physical world, and see whether the same principles could not be applied in testing and proving speculations concerning cause and effect in the moral world. What is the effect upon human character and human happiness of given social and physical conditions—climate, institutions, customs, laws? How can conclusions upon such points be proved? These were the questions in which Mill was interested, and the striking novelty of his work was its endeavour to show that propositions of cause and effect in human affairs must be proved, if they admit of proof at all, absolute or approximate, on the same principles with propositions of cause and effect in the material world."

EMERSON.

I.

It is an instructive fact in the history of culture that the English-speaking population of North America, while considerably outnumbering for some time back that of the old country, has thus far contributed but a small part of the permanently important literature of the language. Save for the very notable works of Jonathan Edwards, which bring such remarkable reasoning power to the demonstration of the incredible, and for the vigorous rationality of Franklin, American authorship only began to exist for English readers within the present century; and only in the latter half of it have American books begun to get any cordial recognition. The novels of Fenimore Cooper represented no original or enduring culture force; and the pleasing works of Washington Irving were rather an assimilation of previous English culture than an addition to it. It is with Emerson that a visibly important American factor first appears in our higher literature; and while in Emerson's first generation there were at least two other American figures in the front literary rank, the number to-day is certainly no greater absolutely, and is smaller proportionally. Contemporary with the young Emerson were Edgar Poe, that singular apparition of pure intellect in the literature of imagination; and Hawthorne, nearly the first great novelist of the psychological school, and still the most individual. Longfellow, of course, has been much more popular than either of these, as Dr. Holmes has perhaps been more popular than Emerson, but these beloved writers hardly count as first-rate literary influences. And whereas the strangeness and subtlety of Hawthorne keep him the favourite of only a minority, and the electric light of Poe's intellect is too cold and unearthly to please average human nature, Emerson remains, of that group, the one who will be most generally recognised as an important writer on this side of the Atlantic. Since Emerson's rise to fame, again, we have Mr. Lowell, happily still alive, and still in general power second to no critic of his time; and among the younger men, two highly accomplished novelists, at the very top of the second rank, Mr. James and Mr. Howells, of whom the former is even more gifted as a critic than as a fictionist. Further, we have Walt Whitman, who in some respects has influenced men's minds in this country more forcibly than any of his now surviving contemporaries, by virtue rather of his spirit and message than of his literary performance. That short list exhausts the foremost names in American literature for fifty years back; and if at this moment we in England seem to flag in the production of first-rate writers and thinkers, the ebb is still more obvious in the United States, since here several men of the first degree of reputation still survive. A few able scholars there are in the great Republic, and a number of more or less capable writers on sociology and philosophy, of whom Mr. Lester Ward and Mr. Daniel Greenleaf Thompson deserve special mention. But these writers have still to conquer a British or European fame; and the fact remains that the great American population yields a very small crop of eminent writers.

The fact cannot be faced without some casting-about for an explanation, and that is not easy to formulate. It cannot be merely that the limited development of university life in the States is unfavourable to literature, for the majority of our own leading writers of the past hundred years owe little or nothing to universities. The younger Mill, Ricardo, Grote, Scott, Dickens, Lewes, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, George Eliot, Mrs. Browning, Charlotte Brontë, Jane Austen—these men and women represent no university training; and though our poets generally do, still Browning might conceivably have had as much importance without attending London University, and Thackeray's work savours little of his university preparation. And the same with Darwin, not to speak of Carlyle. Nor can the discrepancy be wholly due to the commercial conditions of American literature, which go to starve out the native author by the unlimited reproduction of books imported from England;[1] for the majority of the English writers I have named do not represent life conditions peculiar to this country. Apparently we must allow something for both these causes, operating directly and indirectly, and add the inference that a productive intellectual soil takes a long time to develop even in a receptive community. America has produced one of the very greatest of inventors, Edison, and a perfect multitude of lesser inventors; but her literature is still indigent in point of quality relatively to her civilisation. In fine, the general civilisation has not yet been overtaken by the thought of the literary class; and the chances are that important social re-adjustments will take place before that happens.

II.

Emerson then represents for us the most conspicuous American influence on modern English culture. Before him, as Mr. Lowell says, his countrymen were "still socially and intellectually moored to English thought": it was he who "cut the cable" and gave them "a chance at the dangers and the glories of blue water."[2] And though Emerson's main lines of thought were not new, and not peculiar to him, his was essentially an independent development. Mr. John Burroughs has said of him that his culture was "ante-natal,"[3] this by way of summing-up the remarkably copious clerical ancestry of which he came on both sides of the house. If the effect of many generations of clergymen were to produce Emersons, human prospects would in general be brighter; but we must continue to surmise that Emerson owed rather more to the culture he imbibed after birth than to what he inherited. What he did inherit—and this is sometimes overlooked—was a faculty for rhetoric, in the best meaning of the term, both on the side of the literary sense and the necessary physical equipments. At school the future lecturer asserted himself not in any noteworthy intellectuality, such as might have been looked for in the scion of a clerical line, but in a turn for recitation—certainly of his own verses.[1] What is more, the terse effective style of his mature writing is evidently formed on the model of the epistolary and conversational manner of that very remarkable woman, his aunt, whose style we know he greatly admired,[2] and whose influence on the formation of his character he has emphatically acknowledged.[3] I see the Puritan moral heredity much more in her than in him. Passionately attached to her nephews, she yet was capable of absolutely breaking with Ralph Waldo in later life, despite his continued affection, simply because she could not tolerate his "airy speculations."[4] Not that she was an orthodox Puritan. Her nephew has told us[5] how, with a strong constitutional clinging to the old Calvinism, she was in spite of herself a reasoner and a sceptic, and so always divided against herself. In her, a strenuous intelligence was welded to a passionate and headstrong character; in her nephew, whose mother was of a stable and undemonstrative temperament,[6] the inherited leanings were modified by a serene temper and a turn for what Walt Whitman points to when he says, "I loafe and invite my soul." There is small trace of the Puritan in that; and though Emerson drew back after his first praise of the "Leaves of Grass," he was always something of a Greek, composed in the presence of the primary human instincts.

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[1] The new copyright law will modify this tendency.

[2] Essay on Thoreau in *My Study Windows.*

[3] *Birds and Poets,* English ed. p. 223.

Mr. Lowell would seem to make out that the trace was obvious, but it is all a matter of the use of terms. "The Puritanism of the past," he says, "found its unwilling poet in Hawthorne, the rarest creative imagination of the century, the rarest in some ideal respects since Shakspere; but the Puritanism that cannot die, the Puritanism that made New England what it is, and is destined to make America what it should be, found its voice in Emerson."[7] And he further says: "The truth is, that both

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[1] Cabot's *Memoir*, English ed. i. 44.

[2] *Ib.* i. 58.

[3] *Ib.* i. 30.

[4] *Ib. Ib.*

[5] *Ib.* p. 31.

[6] *Ib.* pp. 35, 37.

[7] Essay cited.

Scotch Presbyterianism and New England Puritanism made their new avatar in Carlyle and Emerson, the heralds of their formal decease; and the tendency of the one towards Authority and of the other towards Independency might have been prophesied by whoever had studied history." Well, on that plan you might prove that anything came of any one thing that preceded it. To say that Carlyle grows out of Scotch Presbyterianism, and that, as Mr. Lowell further puts it, "the Transcendental Movement was the Protestant spirit of Puritanism seeking a new outlet," is much the same as it would be to say that Protestantism grew out of Catholicism, and Christianity out of Paganism, and so on for ever. There is a positive truth in each of these propositions, but only the general truth of evolutionary change. James Mill came of Scotch Presbyterianism just as much as Carlyle did; and he tended not towards Authority but towards Independency. And unless I am mistaken, New England Puritanism to this day would stand upon Authority pretty often if it could, as it certainly did in the past, no less than Scotch Presbyterianism. No: if Protestantism or Puritanism is to be credited with the Transcendental movement, it is also to be credited with Atheism, which, as Mr. Lowell would admit, must have descended from something.

I prefer to say that Emerson, brought up in New England Unitarianism, and coming early under the influence of Channing, as well as of European Transcendentalists, gradually let go the last remnants of definite dogma that he had inherited, and professed a Theism which he never took any logical trouble to distinguish from Pantheism.[1] The successive stages of Unitarianism, of which he thus exhibited the last, are perfectly intelligible, so much so that one's only puzzle is as to how so much of the old Unitarianism still survives. It does so, I suppose, as a result of the continued movement of reluctant Christians along the line of least resistance to their emotions. I always think, though Unitarians do not seem ever to admit it, that the sect owed a good deal last century to the movement of the Deists, as it was modified by the criticism of Butler. Logical Deists, met by that criticism, would answer that it clearly gave no more voucher for Christianity than for Mohammedanism, and that the final position of reason must be Atheism, or what some now call Agnosticism. Less logical Deists, unable however to accept all the extravagances of Christism, would be disposed to range themselves with Priestley. However that may be, Unitarianism has at no time presented itself as a movement that fostered perfectly consistent or penetrating thought. Good service it has rendered in detail scholarship, from Lardner down to Samuel Sharpe, but never, I think, any notable help to accurate reasoning; though of course the admirers of Dr. Martineau will give a very different judgment. And in Emerson, the literary flower of the movement in America, we see just the kind of development that remained possible after the old spirit of cautious rationalism had played itself out, and the system was left to the influences of vaguely catholic emotion. Some would gravitate to orthodoxy; others would pass into poetic pantheism.

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[1] "Emerson might, in his 'metaphysics' [*Collected Writings*, ii. 58], deny personality to God; but he never gave much attention to his metaphysics, and what he means by personality seems to be nothing more than limitation to an individual." Cabot, i., 340.

Emerson's withdrawal from his ministerial charge represents the strength of the orthodox bias among the Unitarians of his day. There was no precise conflict of nominal belief between him and his flock; only Emerson was averse to keeping up the institution of the Communion, as being irrelevant and of too much impaired significance, while the congregation, true to the religious idiosyncrasy, did not see why he should abandon a venerable practice. He was really asking them to go back to the position from which the early Unitarians of Poland had been persuaded away by Sozzini; but they, grown fixed in Socinian orthodoxy, would not follow him. He was disappointed, but quietly withdrew, and the world gained an essayist and lecturer, while the sect lost a preacher always a little too essayish and secular for its taste. His gift of elocution and phrase and charm of presence had given him his main hold; and we learn that he "won his first admirers in the pulpit," while he shocked or disturbed others.[1] On the merits of his withdrawal one can only say that if he was willing to keep up the assumption of the Bible being a special revelation, he might as well have held by the bread and wine Communion. As he himself argued later against other people: "What is the use of going about setting up a flag of negation?"[2] The bread and wine Communion is a venerable usage, which was old in Mithraism before it was adopted by the Christians. But your eclectic is always liable to caprices.

III.

Emerson's recoil from the orthodoxies of Dissent must needs have been strengthened by that early visit to Europe, in the course of which he saw Italy and Landor, and England and Coleridge, Wordsworth and Carlyle. His instinct for distinction and the refinement of cultured life was reinforced, and his leanings took him in the way of men who would encourage his Transcendentalism without pressing him to cultivate his deficient logic. For he himself early recognised his complete lack of the power of continuous reasoning; and, as human nature is apt to do, he sought to make out to himself that his defect was rather an advantage. In his journal, at the age of 21, we find him writing of his love of poetry, with the addition: "My reasoning faculty is proportionally weak; nor can I ever hope to write a Butler's 'Analogy,' or an 'Essay' of Hume." And then he goes on to plume himself with the reflection that "the highest species of reasoning upon divine subjects is rather the fruit of a sort of moral imagination than of the reasoning machines, such as Locke, and Clarke, and David Hume."[3] Now, that doctrine, which is not peculiar to Emerson, brings us to close quarters with what we may term the practical side of his Transcendentalism. His views on this head, as on all other points of his philosophy, were very loosely held; and against such a deliverance as the foregoing, you may find in his works plenty of a contrary tone. Nor is this surprising when we realise that Emerson had fallen into a mere empirical confusion, which, however, has ensnared many harder reasoners than he. No concrete issue comes up oftener in modern philosophy than this as to how men come by what we call original ideas, by new generalisations, or flashes of perception which seem to have no derivation from previous knowledge. Kant, I am much inclined to believe, was led to his special theory of Reason by way of accounting for his own intellectual experiences in the course of those earlier scientific speculations of his which the students of his philosophy, as a rule, so strangely ignore. Again and again others have insisted on that progressive element in the human understanding which so constantly exhibits itself in hypothesis; and men have frequently been led to suppose that this progressive element is something wholly unconnected with what we call the reasoning faculty, or at least with the process of reasoning, commonly so called.[1] You will find this attitude partly assumed by Edgar Poe.[2] Goethe appears to have adopted it when he found that the scientists would not accept his theory of colours;[3] and Schopenhauer, whose philosophy ran so much to the personal equation, repeatedly affirmed the position,[4] which he found lying ready to his hands in previous Romanticism and Transcendentalism. He too uses language which amounts to calling previous philosophers reasoning machines; and though he would have made short work of Emerson's philosophisings, he might have said with him: "I believe that nothing great and lasting can be done except by inspiration, by leaning on the secret augury."[5]

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[1] Cabot, i., 150.

[2] Said to one who objected to be called a Christian. J. B. Thayer, *A Western Journey with Mr. Emerson*, p. 18.

[3] Cabot, i., 100-1.

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[1] It was contemned by Bacon. On this compare the criticisms of Jevons (*Principles of Science*, p. 576), and Bagehot (*Postulates of English Pol. Ec.*, pp. 17-19), and Mill (*Logic*, B. vi., ch. 5, § 5).

[2] In the *Eureka*.

[3] See Professor Wallace's *Life of Schopenhauer*, p. 83

[4] *Ib.* pp. 82, 87, 96-97, &c.

[5] *Letters and Social Aims: Inspiration*

Now, the whole question is, what is this secret augury? Is it something which the reasoners never have? On the contrary, it is the condition precedent of all their work. It shows how narrow and how superficial a would-be profound and really catholic Transcendentalist can be, that Emerson should never have suspected that the analytic ideas of Locke and Hume are just as much inspirations, or secret auguries, as his own. There can be no greater blunder than to suppose that men who use the analytic method begin to get notions by analysing mechanically. The act of analysis is itself a reaching-forward identical in character with what Emerson called the secret augury. People who object to consequent literary criticism tell you that true appreciation is for them a matter of spontaneous judgment. But so it is for the critic. Always the impression comes first and the analysis and the reasoning after. I have heard a Wagnerian attempt to disparage the late Edmund Gurney's criticism of Wagner, by saying that Gurney had a feeling against that music and sat down to find reasons for it. Now, as that Wagnerian ought to have known from his own experience, that is the formula of all criticism. The whole question is whether your subsequent reasoning does or does not prove your particular impression to be consistent with all your other impressions; and the advantage of the reasoner, the analyst, over other people is that he applies this test, which is at bottom the only way of distinguishing truth from error, while the mere impressionist has no test, and rests in his secret augury as he began. The formula of all error is just Incomplete Thought; and he insists on keeping his thought as incomplete as possible. Inspiration is "as plentiful as blackberries." Coleridge told an inquiring lady that he did not believe in ghosts because he had seen too many. So the circumspect rationalist does not believe in inspirations because he has had too many. He knows that while the test of reasoning, the test of universal consistency, verifies some of his inspirations, it discredits many more; and he knows better than to bow before a notion merely because it came into his head, when he knows there was no other way that an error could come. That he should ever have new ideas may be o him a mystery; but not more of a mystery[1] than the fact that his muscles grow stronger with using. Any fairly intelligent person can have fifty inspirations in a morning walk; and if he uses Emerson's literary method, and has a touch of Emerson's literary genius, he may soon make books of them. But even if he has unquestioned genius, he will, I fear, be preparing a good deal of matter for the dustbins of posterity.

Emerson's genius is certainly beyond question. Such a gift of luminous and stimulant speech, in single dicta, you shall not readily parallel in all literature. And, be it said at once, multitudes of the sayings are as true and valuable as they are brilliant. But we are dealing for the moment with that Emersonian principle of the secret augury, considered as an asserted truth. It is just as much a counsel of darkness as a counsel of perfection. Act on it, and you can as well be a bigot and a crank as a liberal and a sane citizen. What else did all those fanatics and enthusiasts do, at whom Emerson smiled or shrugged his shoulders? At times he would answer, no doubt, that it was well they should be what they were; but in that case all his counsels to mankind were strictly gratuitous—that is, if you were to allow yourself to reason on the matter.

IV.

This weak place in Emerson's doctrine is sufficiently obvious to his more intelligent disciples; and when I speak of disciples, I should still wish to be ranked as, at least, an ex-pupil. Emerson helps you, half the time, to anti-Emersonise. But still there are always the idolators, or the lovers, who are fain to deny or palliate the obvious. Emerson in effect teaches a hundred times over that truth is just how you happen to feel; and plain people on this observe that that is a very good gospel for self-conceit. And in point of fact, while Emerson is in the main one of the most like-able and modest of men, this very foible of committing himself to every "inspiration" that struck him, makes him often utter what amounts to idle arrogance. What name but conceit can we give to that phrase about Locke and Hume being mere reasoning machines—as if it were any better to be an imagining machine? His later depreciation of the masterly Hume as a man who was not deep, and who won his reputation by a single keen observation,[1] taken with the further facile depreciation of so many powerful faculties, as those of Scott and Gibbon,[2] goes to convince us that only the habit of connected reasoning, resting on a favourable temperament, will ever make a thoroughly catholic mind. Emerson's temperament was in itself admirable: his natural gift of amenity and catholicity is always shining through even his dogmatism; but still the narrowness and the dogmatism are there, because he must needs book all his "inspirations." As if all our prejudices and unjust caprices were not such!

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[1] On this compare again Mill's *Autobiography*, p. 180, and Todhunter's *Conflict of Studies*, p. 15.

On the question of the philosophic and practical bearing of this doctrine, as put in the phrases, "Revere your intuitions," "To the involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due," and so on, Mr. Cabot, in his "Memoir of Emerson," observes that "nothing was more foreign to him than idolatry of his opinions or his moods."[3] Now, that is quite true in the sense that in Emerson one mood readily drove out another, and an inspiration of arrogance was soon checked by an inspiration of humility. But is not this claim an admission that Emerson abounds in contradictions, and that some of his most characteristic doctrines are not to be taken as if he fully or constantly meant them, but only as rash indications of one of his prevailing mental habits? The best that can be made of the matter is Mr. Cabot's proposition[4] that "reverence for intuitions meant to Emerson resistance to the sleep that is apt to come over our spiritual faculties." No doubt Emerson does help much to dispel that sleep; but it is also true that he often promotes it, or a trance that is singularly like it in results, by encouraging superficial people to worship their prejudices, and those habit-born notions which get to feel like necessary truths.

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[1] *English Traits*, ch. xiv.

[2] For Emerson, "Poe was merely 'the man who jingles.'" Conway, *R. W. Emerson*, p. 292. After this it is well to know that "Of himself he said once, when forced to speak, 'My reputation, such as it is, will be one day cited to prove the poverty of this time.'"

[3] Cabot, *Memoir of Emerson*, i., p. 251.

[4] p. 252.

The flaw in the matter is really that kind of mental indolence in Emerson which consists with, or consists in, the incapacity for the drudgery work of thinking. That stamps all his writings regarded as literary compositions, and all his verse, regarded as a set of artistic performances. What is it in his poetry that baffles and repels so many friendly readers, and all his best critics? The constant lapsing from metre and rhythm, the frequent hiatus in music and flow, which is, in the last analysis, the result of sheer want of taking pains, since no man capable of verse at all could commit such offences in pure blindness. It is "the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin" that make all these racking gaps and fissures in the texture of Emerson's verse, supremely fortunate as it so often is in detached inspirations. He knew it himself: again and again he confesses to a "vast debility,"[1] to an inveterate indolence. In his heart he knew that great and enduring books could not well be made as his were, by the process of jotting down all random ideas in note-books, indexing them, and then just collecting them under headings, in essays or lectures, eked out as need might be.[2] Carlyle, in all friendliness, early compared the essays to bags of shot[3]; and Emerson himself, in a letter to Carlyle, spoke of his manner of composition as one which made "each sentence an infinitely repellent particle."[4] "He was well aware," says Mr. Cabot, "of the inconsecutiveness that came from his way of writing, and liked it as little as anybody:—

> "(Journal, 1854)—'If Minerva offered me a gift and an option, I would say, give me continuity. I am tired of scraps. I do not wish to be a literary or intellectual *chiffonnier*. Away with this Jew's rag-bag of ends and tufts of brocade, velvet, and cloth-of-gold; and let me spin some yards

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[1] Letter to Carlyle, *Correspondence*, ii., 334. Also pp. 59, 326, etc.

[2] Cabot, i. 294.

[3] *Correspondence*, ii., 82.

[4] *Correspondence*, i., 161.

or miles of helpful twine; a clue to lead to one kingly truth; a cord to bind some wholesome and belonging facts.'"

Such directness of self-criticism is startling and pathetic; for the moment it disarms our criticism, especially by being so well phrased. But it was only a passing mood, as Mr. Cabot goes on to show:—

> "But it was contrary to his literary creed to aim at completeness of statement:—
>
> "'I would not degrade myself by casting about for a thought, nor by waiting for one. If the thought come, I would give it entertainment; but if it comes not spontaneously, it comes not rightly at all.'"[1]

Thus does self-will send self-criticism packing. But indeed this too is pathetic. How easily can the wisest of us, as here, cajole ourselves into feeling that our foible is our *forte*, and our indolence the choice of our enlightenment. For all which, Time will bring us into judgment, if we be writers of books. Those of us who have most ingenuously delighted in Emerson feel at times the chill of a coming indifference. Everybody knows the story of the effect of his lecture on Plato:—"Can you tell me," asked one of his neighbours, while Emerson was lecturing, "what connection there is between that last sentence and the one that went before, and what connection it all has with Plato?" "None, my friend, save in God!" One reads with regret Walt Whitman's disdainful remark that he had called Emerson Master for a month in his youth; this after he had availed himself of, and gained so much by, Emerson's cordial praise of his first book. But it must be admitted that that Master's dignity is insecure, of whom his disciples come to feel that his lamp to their path may at any moment be a will-o'-the-wisp for all they can tell beforehand. As he himself said, Even a wise man speaks three times without his full understanding for once that he speaks with it. And he was unduly adventurous in the face of his confessed risks.

[1] Cabot, i. 295.

V.

If our explanation be the right one, that he did not think hard enough in proportion to his gift of crystallising and phrasing his impressions, our negative criticism may soon be ended as regards his so-called philosophy, which was produced under the same conditions as his every-day aphorisms. By this time, indeed, all his leading exponents have admitted that he is not to be looked to for philosophy properly so-called.[1] He was a poet, giving voice to those pantheistic impressions which have come to poets in all ages and in all civilisations, Hindu, Greek, Egyptian, Teutonic. Poetry, if you like, is primeval philosophy. The more need that we should be clear as to the philosophic inadequacy of the poetic method in the age of science and prose, which is such a much more resourceful thing. Like his predecessors and contemporaries in the intuitive faith, Emerson had ever and anon an exalted perception of the unity of the universe, which in his poetic exaltation he must needs call God; and like them, he proceeded with fatal unconsciousness in every other mood to repudiate his generalisation and reduce the unity to duality, to multiplicity, to the terms of the perceptions of the people who do not generalise at all. "Transcendentalism was to him," says Mr. Cabot, "not a particular set of doctrines, but a state of mind."[2] Say an occasional state of mind, and you have complete accuracy. Mr. Cabot himself thus states Emerson's doctrine as to the relation of man to the all-pervading energy:—"When he *submits his will to the Divine inspiration*, he becomes a creator in the finite. *If he is disobedient*, if he would be something in himself, he finds all things hostile and incomprehensible." What girlish inconsistency is this? How in the name of reason can a human phenomenon be disobedient to the universal Will? Is not even Madness as truly Nature as Sanity? To this dilemma must always come the would-be Seer who persists in formulating the Universe in terms of his own transient soul, and making its measureless energy a God in his own image.

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[1] "Mr. Emerson's place is among poetic, not among philosophic minds." Frothingham, *Transcendentalism in New England*, p. 236.

[2] Cabot, ii. 39.

Emerson talking on Atheism is as conventional, as inanely clerical, as Carlyle. Hear him in a late tractate, fittingly entitled "The Preacher:"—

> "Unlovely, nay frightful, is the solitude of the soul which is without God in the world. To wander all day in the sunlight among the tribes of animals, unrelated to anything better, to behold the horse, cow, and bird—no, the bird, as it hurried by with its bold and perfect flight, would disclaim his sympathy, and declare him an outcast. To see man pursuing in faith their varied action, warm-hearted, providing for their children, loving their friends, performing their promises—what are they to this chill, houseless, fatherless, aimless Cain, the man who hears only the sound of his own footsteps in God's resplendent creation? To him, it is no creation; to him, these fair creatures are hapless spectres; he knows not what to make of it; to him, heaven and earth have lost their beauty."[1]

The hand is the hand of Emerson, though the voice is the voice of Talmage. Every phrase is a negation of the principle of the Over-Soul, of the Universal Spirit, of the Unity of Nature, of the law of Compensations, of all the doctrines in which Emerson rises above conventionality. The bird relates providentially to the Universe; but the heretical man does not. And the end of it all is that the Over-Soul animates all things, except those which it doesn't. Let the preacher be answered by a stave of his own song of Brahma, in which, echoing the philosophy of ancient India, he comes almost within sight of a consistent Pantheism:—

"They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings."

After the prose, certainly, Emersonians may with much plausibility deny that Emerson was a Pantheist. Theodore Parker denied it indignantly. "He has been foolishly accused of Pantheism, which sinks God in nature; but no man is further from it. He never sinks God in man."[1] Here, again, we are reading the language of one who, though a moralist and a scholar, cannot properly philosophise. To say that Pantheism "sinks" God in Nature, when it says God *is* Nature, is the merest hiding behind words; and to say that "no man is further" from Pantheism than Emerson is to be very reckless indeed. Others of his admirers admit that Emerson "will always doubtless be open to the charge of Pantheism;" and they can only urge that where his phraseology is "undoubtedly pantheistic," it is "poetical, not to be read literally."[2] The simple truth is, as we have seen, that Emerson was sometimes pantheistic and sometimes not, because of his fortuitous method of thinking and composing. "He ignores," says one of his best expositors, "those sharp distinctions and definitions which would have saved him from the charge of Pantheism."[3] He "ignored" them because he could not make them. "The children of the gods," he declared, "never argue."[4] No; not if they cannot, which would seem to be the nature of that family.

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[1] Essay on *The Preacher*, in *Unitarian Review*, Jan., 1880; cited by G. W. Cooke, *R. W. Emerson*, p. 289.

Now, we cannot say that all this fallacy and contradiction is a light matter: we cannot dismiss it with the Emersonian aphorism that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds," and that "with consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." When great or other souls apply that principle to commercial morals, they are apt to get into jail; and if they habitually act on it in didactics they are likely to be confined one day to the second-hand bookstalls. Rational men will never be bounced out of common sense by bravado of that sort. Happily for Emerson, he could not be consistent in inconsistency, though he flaunted the flag of chaos. Some harm, however, must have been done by his bravado among the weaker heads; and we shall perhaps not be wrong in laying at his door the condition of subsequent American literature in the matter of religious flatulence. These schoolgirl philosophemes of his are grown fatally popular in the country which he taught to be proud of him. We have enough of irrational Theism in these islands in all conscience; but American Theism is a product so copious, so spontaneous, as to deserve a separate label in literary commerce You splash into it everywhere, in Mr. Howell's charming novels, in Mr. Lowell's admirable criticisms, in the novels and criticisms which are neither admirable nor charming. It reaches at times an astonishing degree of gaseousness. Mr. O. B. Frothingham, who has written an interesting and useful history of New England Transcendentalism, writes of the phenomenon, with apparent rationality, as "a wave of sentiment" which elated and transported a few people, and passed on. With probable truth he declares that it had a powerful influence on character. But beyond that point he becomes incoherent. "New England character," he affirms in one breath, "received from it an impetus that never will be spent." In the next, we learn that "transcendentalism as a special phase of thought and feeling was of necessity transient—having done its work it terminated its existence." It is not now surprising to learn that a "phase of thought" "did its work, and its work was glorious."[1] And after that we can turn back with a scientific interest to the proposition that, in the Hegelianism of Bruno Bauer and Strauss, "by being adopted into the line of the intellectual development of mankind, Christianity, though dethroned and disenchanted, was dignified as a supreme moment in the autobiography of God."[2] Comment here would not be superfluous, but I find it impossible. All I can manage to say is, that you need only give a Theist rope enough if you desire to see his philosophic existence violently curtailed.

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[1] Cited by Cooke, p. 290.

[2] *Ib.* p. 291.

[3] *Ib.*

[4] Mr. Conway's *R. W. Emerson*, p. 272.

VI.

It is a relief to turn from these phases of a state of mind which Emerson unluckily fostered, to others which can be contemplated with very different feelings. Taking his books in the mass, we

Transcendentalism in New England, pp. 355-6.

p. 186.

may say of them that if his moonshine is much the same as other people's, his sunshine is peculiarly his own, and very much above the average. Matthew Arnold, after going in his gracefully incisive way over the points of Emerson's work, and settling that he is not a great writer of prose, because his style "wants the requisite wholeness of good tissue," and that he is not a great poet because he lacks plainness and concreteness and the power of evolution, finally decides that, nevertheless, "as Wordsworth's poetry is in my judgment the most important work done in verse, in our language, during the present century, so Emerson's *Essays* are, I think, the most important work done in prose. His work is more important than Carlyle's."[1] He is not a great writer or man of letters in the sense that Cicero and Swift and Plato and Bacon and Pascal and Voltaire are great writers; but still, in that he "holds fast to happiness and hope" as he does, he is the most important English prose writer of the century. That verdict is very characteristic of Arnold, in its suave arbitrariness; and of course his "most important" cannot be taken as final for Emerson any more than for Wordsworth. Arnold had not the means or the method of finding out what is really "most important" in the literature of a century. He would pass over all Spencer with a graceful wave of the hand and the handkerchief, and sum up in a limpid phrase the heavy volumes he had not read. It would not occur to him to ask how it was, precisely, that George Eliot, or Mill, was less "important" than Emerson; or wherein importance chiefly consisted, and why. But if we take the generalisation with the discount which is proper for Arnold's "paper," we shall find ourselves directed to a reasonably just conclusion. Emerson's hold of "happiness and hope" is not quite the most important thing in our nineteenth century English prose, because these are not the things of which we stand in the most pressing need; but when all is said, his gift to us in that regard is a splendid one. Certainly no one stimulates as he does. The morality of George Eliot has invalid airs and an indoors odour in comparison; and the thinkers, while they instruct, exhaust us somewhat. But in

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[1] *Discourses in America*, p. 193.

Emerson you have ever the air of the Concord woods and plains, the air that Thoreau breathed by Walden Lake. His very foible of booking all his inspirations has given us a multitude of tonic sentences, of exhilarations that pulse as if from the veins of spring. Arnold, and everybody else, has remembered how the young heart responds to some of his unmatchable phrases. "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist.[1] He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world."[2] There is the pure note of the moral truth in the doctrine of the secret augury and the inward voice: the true note, neither sharp nor flat, concordant with all the master notes of human science. Again and again comes in that vibration, which is the breath in the nostrils of democracy: —

> "Zoologists may deny that horsehairs in the water change to worms; but I find that whatever is old corrupts, and the past turns to snakes. The reverence for the deeds of our ancestors is a treacherous sentiment. *Their* merit was not to reverence the old, but to honour the present moment; and we falsely make them the excuses of the very habit which they hated and defied."[3] "The reliance on property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long, that they have come to esteem the religious, learned, and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these because they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has and not by what each is. But a cultivated man becomes ashamed of his property, out of new respect for his nature. Especially he hates what he has, if he see that it is accidental—came to him by inheritance, or gift, or crime; then he feels that it is not having; it does not belong to him, has no root in him, and merely lies there because no revolution or no robber takes it away."[4]

These maxims of his on politics are certainly worth many treatises as stimulants to what is best in men; and though States cannot any more than men live on stimulants, they may at times escape death or prostration by them. When I think of the resonant nobleness of some of his didactic verse I forgive its unfiled rudeness; and in the end I decline to subscribe to Arnold's dictum that a smoothly musical performance of Longfellow or Whittier is worth all Emerson's poetry. His song is short-breathed and soon broken, but he has caught notes of Apollo that they have never heard. His poetic teaching has a quintessential quality that is to theirs what Milton is to Cowper; and at times it only needs the last magic of finish to compare with the noblest song in Goethe:—

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[1] Naturally Mr. Arnold did not quote this clause.

[2] *Self-Reliance.* [3] *Works and Days.* [4] *Self-Reliance.*

"Nor kind nor coinage buys
  Aught above its rate.
Fear, Craft, and Avarice
  Cannot rear a State.
Out of dust to build
  What is more than dust—
Walls Amphion piled
  Phœbus stablish must.
When the Muses nine
  With the Virtues meet,
Find to their design
  An Atlantic seat,
By green orchard boughs
  Fended from the heat,
Where the statesman ploughs
  Furrow for the wheat,—
When the church is social worth,
When the state-house is the hearth,
Then the perfect state is come,
The republican at home."[1]

In other keys and measures he can attain to radiances of phrase and thought that are not for the Longfellows at their luckiest. And when we are dissecting, as we must, the fibre of his teaching, and rigorously weighing his message, even as he himself fully authorised us to do, we can hardly refuse to bow at least for a moment under the melodious rebuke which in one of his moods he passed on a friend:—

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[1] *Prelude to Essay on Politics.*

"Set not thy foot on graves;
Nor seek to unwind the shroud
Which charitable Time
And Nature have allowed
To wrap the errors of a sage sublime.

"Set not thy foot on graves;
Care not to strip the dead
Of his sad ornament,
His myrrh, and wine, and rings,
His sheet of lead,
And trophies buriѐd:
Go, get them where he earned them when alive;
As resolutely dig and dive.

"Life is too short to waste
In critic peep or cynic bark,
Quarrel or reprimand;
'Twill soon be dark;
Up! mind thine own aim, and
God speed the mark!"[1]

But, indeed, there is small suggestion of the grave as yet about Emerson's teaching; nor will there soon be. He is the very poet of optimism, which it is not an easy thing to be: prosperity is prosaic, and the poetic instinct turns most spontaneously to shadow. It is his glory, and a glory not easily won, to have convinced men that every age must find its highest inspiration in itself if it is ever to be capable of giving inspiration to others. Before Walt Whitman, though Whitman seems to have forgotten it, he taught the people of America to frame a literature for themselves:—[2]

"The test or measure of poetic genius is the power to read the poetry of affairs—to fuse the circumstance of to-day; not to use Scott's antique superstitions, or Shakespeare's, but to convert those of the nineteenth century and of the existing nations into universal symbols. 'Tis easy to repaint the mythology of the Greeks or of the Catholic Church, the feudal castle, the crusade, the martyrdoms of mediæval Europe; but to point out

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[1] "To J. W."

[2] As did Poe, *Marginalia,* vii.; Ingram's ed. of *Works,* iii., 351.

> where the same creative force is now working in our own houses and public assemblies, to convert the vivid energies working at this hour into universal symbols, requires a subtle and commanding thought. . . . Every man would be a poet if his intellectual digestion were perfect. The test of the poet is the power to take the passing day, with its news, its cares, its fears, as he shares them, and hold it up to a divine reason till he sees it to have a purpose and beauty, and to be related to astronomy and history and the eternal order of the world. There is no subject that does not belong to him—politics, economy, manufactures, and stock-brokerage—as much as sunsets and souls; only these things, placed in their true order, are poetry; displaced or put in kitchen order, they are unpoetic." [1]

These are the words of a man who lived his life genuinely and with genius; and if they and others of his doctrines are found to expand some that are associated with the name of Carlyle, nothing can be idler than to repeat the vacuous old epigram that he was but a pocket edition of his friend. [2] Carlyle himself seems to have thought that Emerson was in a measure a "spiritual son" of his; but it would be hard to lay the finger on a passage in Emerson, good or bad, wise or unwise, which he could not conceivably have come by if Carlyle had never lived. That he himself was a magnetic and commanding personality is shown by his marked influence on Thoreau,[3] who, however, made the Emersonian style as much his own as Emerson did when he developed it from that of his aunt. Thoreau, I take it, repaid the debt when he gave Emerson the right lead on the slavery question. Not that Emerson could, under any conceivable circumstances, have gone wrong on that as Carlyle went wrong; but that it did not come quite naturally to him to cleave to the right side in the face of all its extravagances and fanaticisms. At first he was not hearty against slavery; and he blamed the Abolitionists for their "impatience of discipline" and "haste to rule before we have served." [4] But his "unhappy conscience" respected them; and he went straight. By degrees he warmed to the great issue. From the first he spoke well: no man better; but he writes of it in his journal as "stirring in philanthropical mud," and adds:—"I fully sympathise, be sure, with the sentiment I write; but I accept it rather from my friends than dictate it. It is not my impulse to say it."[1] At an earlier stage he had sophisticated himself out of doing anything by means of his all-accommodating Theism. In 1852 he wrote in his journal:—

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[1] *Letters and Social Aims: Poetry and Imagination.*

[2] That this view was shared by Poe is one of the heaviest critical charges against that great critic. (*Works*, iii. 378.)

[3] Described in Cabot's *Memoir*.

[4] Cabot, ii. 45.

> "I waked last night and bemoaned myself because I had not thrown myself into the deplorable question of slavery, which seems to want nothing so much as a few assured voices. But then, in hours of sanity, I recover myself and say, God must govern his own world, and knows his way out of this pit without my desertion of my post, which has none to guard it but me. I have quite other slaves to free than those negroes, to wit, imprisoned spirits, imprisoned thoughts, far back in the brain of man—far retired in the heaven of invention, and which, important to the republic of man, have no watchman, or lover, or defender but I."[2]

On that reasoning no man need ever move, since God could always find his way out of the pit if he wanted; and if he did not go, why then it was best so. But when the crisis came, Emerson's manhood pushed his theistic sophistry aside, and in the fiery trial of the war his heart did not falter or change, seeming indeed to find there, as others found, the rectification of many moral confusions.

But his service to mankind is wider than the example of his own conduct in any one conjuncture; and it is wider, too, than his mere optimism, bracing as that is. Arnold, estimating in his facile way the value of the *English Traits*, decides that that book misses permanent value because it is the "observation of a man systematically benevolent," as Hawthorne's *Our Old Home* fails because it is "the work of a man chagrined."[3] That is a singular misfit in criticism. Emerson was indeed benevolent, but Arnold's criticism is meaningless unless it signify that his benevolence blinded him to English defects. Now, it did no such thing. The weakness of that book is not systematic benevolence, though it is undoubtedly over-benevolent to Anglo-Saxonism in the lump. Its weakness is that which always inheres in Emerson's method, unresolved contradiction and unabashed inconsistency. If you analyse it you find that, as usual, he has booked every generalisation that occurred to him day by day, and made no attempt to correct one by another, though in the nature of the case each is a generalisation from a few particulars. But take the book as you find it, and you have a series of the most brilliant characterisations of English defects and limitations, so much to Arnold's own purpose, many of them, that you can hardly avoid concluding that he had only skimmed the book or had mostly forgotten it when he spoke of its systematic benevolence.

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[1] Cabot, pp. 51-2.

[2] *Emerson in Concord*, by Edward W. Emerson, p. 78.

[3] *Discourses in America*, p. 173.

But Arnold himself goes on to avow that, "Strong as was Emerson's optimism, and unconquerable as was his belief in a good result to emerge from all which he saw going on around him, no misanthropical satirist ever saw shortcomings and absurdities more clearly than he did, or expressed them more courageously."[1] That is true of his criticism alike of English and American life and institutions; and his general social doctrine, at its best, is medicinal for all civilisation :—

> "'Tis pedantry to estimate nations by the census, or by square miles o land, or other than by their importance to the mind of the time. Leave this hypocritical prating about the masses. Masses are rude, lame, unmade, pernicious in their demands and influence, and need not to be flattered but to be schooled. I wish not to concede anything to them, but to tame, drill, divide, and break them up, and draw individuals out of them. The worst of charity is, that the lives you are asked to preserve are not worth preserving. Masses! the calamity *is* the masses. I do not wish any mass at all, but honest men only; lovely, sweet, accomplished women only; and no shovel-handed, narrow-brained, gin-drinking million stockingers or lazzaroni at all. If Government knew how, I should like to see it check, not multiply, the population. When it reaches its true law of action, every man that is born will be hailed as essential."

These are the words, remember, of a republican of republicans, not merely the friend but spiritually the representative of the temper of democracy. They are not a call for a stoppage of progress, but an earnest incitation to progress of a better kind. "We think our civilisation," he writes again, "near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star." [1] That is a protest and a prediction in one. And if he who delivered it did not also give the science by which the prediction should be realised, none the less is he to be honoured and laurelled for that he brought to bear on all who could share his ideal the compulsion of his noble aspiration and his beautiful speech.

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[1] Pp. 189, 190.

[1] *Politics.*

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

I.

I saw lately pencilled on the title-page of a copy of Mr. Thomas Arnold's handbook of English Literature, an indictment of the Arnold family, by one of those sectaries who still chequer our civilisation in such numbers, and sometimes move one to ask in what sense fanaticism can be said to be disappearing. It was to the effect that the book was written from the Roman Catholic standpoint; and that the Catholicism of the writer, and the scepticism of his brother, Matthew Arnold, and further, the rationalism of their niece, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, were significant of the evil inherent in the educational system of Dr. Arnold, who had brought up his children to be Christians in a merely general sense, without inculcating on them any precise system of doctrine. That commentary is interesting as throwing light on the feeling of English Churchmen about the control of the schools; but I doubt if it is of any more value than other clerical generalisations, as an explanation of the facts it deals with. The Newman family, which diverged in a similar fashion, was brought up, it would appear, in the orthodox manner; and we do not find that rationalists usually come of latitudinarian Christian parents. What may reasonably be suggested is that some of the intellectual tendencies of Dr. Arnold, developed freely in different directions, are to be traced in the careers of his sons; but the most careful doctrinal training by him would conceivably have served only to stimulate and emphasise their special tendencies. He was one of those men who combine a considerable intellectual or critical faculty with a strong emotional or temperamental grasp of inherited beliefs. "The tendency to Atheism, I imagine," he wrote to an ex-pupil, "exists in every study followed up vigorously, without a foundation of faith, and that foundation carefully strengthened and built upon."[1] That candid admission that faith must be established before study, is illustrative of his transparent earnestness of character. He held his simple faith too unreasonably ever to falter in it; but in many directions where that did not bar the way, his mind played intelligently and critically on life; and though for us to-day he is in the main repellent and reactionary by reason of the crudity and virulence of his theology, he was for his own generation a conspicuous Liberal and Broad Churchman. "My quarrel with the anti-liberal party," he wrote to a friend in 1830, "is that they are going the way to force my children to America, and to deprive me and every one else of property, station, and all the inestimable benefits of society in England." And then follows his political creed, very well put:—

> "There is nothing so revolutionary, because there is nothing so unnatural and convulsive to society as the strain to keep things fixed, when all the world is by the very law of its creation in eternal progress; and the cause of all the evils of the world may be traced to that natural but most deadly error of human indolence and corruption, that our business is to preserve and not to improve. It is the ruin of us all alike, individuals, schools, and nations."[2]

But such a man was, of course, very far from being a Liberal all round; very much less of a Liberal, for instance, than his pupil and biographer, Dean Stanley; and in the same letter, declaring that "the aspect of the times is really to my mind awful," he avows: "If I had two necks, I should think that I had a very good chance of being hanged by both sides, as I think I shall now by whichever gets the better, if it really does come to a fight."

It is not easy for us to-day to throw our minds back to 1830, when the boy Matthew Arnold was eight years old, and his father, head-master of Rugby, recoiling alike from Toryism and from rationalistic Liberalism, indignant at the one and shuddering at the other, could talk even figuratively of being hanged by either party, and of his children being driven to America for a livelihood.

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[1] Stanley's *Life of Dr. Arnold*, ch. viii., *Letter* 146. Cf. ch. vi., *Letters* 45 and 46.

[2] Ch. vi., *Letter* 23, to J. T. Coleridge.

We are to remember that those were the days of dear corn, of widespread misery, of the beginnings of Chartism, of the agitation for the Reform Bill; and, on the other hand, of the dominance of that species of Toryism of which we had a dress rehearsal in London a few winters ago, over the Trafalgar Square episode, when a large section of the middle class, encouraged by many of the literary class, shouted with delight at the wanton resort to bloodshed, and eagerly formed gangs of special constables, bent on breaking more heads if there should be a chance. The Liberals of the school of Bentham and James Mill, satisfied that the Church would always be on the side of oppression, and themselves rationally convinced of the folly of its creed, sought to ground right action on moral science, though without challenging the popular creed; and the half-reasonable zealots like Dr. Arnold, outraged by the naked brutality of the prevailing and orthodox party, detested rationalism as much as did the average clergyman. When Arnold saw a popular weekly, of which he admitted he "delighted in its plain and sensible tone," omitting to "speak of Christ," he declared that he "must feel utterly adverse to it," and regarded it as "absolutely circulating poison."[1] Because the "Useful Knowledge Society" did not sauce all its dishes with evangelical pietism, the support of that society by some members of the Government was in his eyes "a matter of deep grief and disapprobation to a large proportion of the best men in this kingdom, while it encourages the hopes of some of the very worst"—the "very worst" being the rationalists. Clearly, such a publicist as this was not likely to do much for the regeneration of his country. Much is to be forgiven to the man who hit on the discovery that schoolboys could be made to tell the truth by simply taking their word; but it is difficult to believe that Dr. Arnold, politically liberal as he was, supplied much philosophic light along with his generally healthy moral leading; and it can have been no fault of his if his pupils and his children were not led by his example and precept to be fervent adherents of the Church of England, and bitter haters of rationalism in religion. Before the secession of Newman he warmly denounced him and his followers for remaining in a Church where they had no business to be; and while he was able to speak with surprising tolerance of Unitarianism,[1] he abhorred Catholicism as much as he did unbelief.[2] For the rest, he seems to have had a devout belief in the existence and activity of a personal devil, of whom he speaks in his letters as often as does Carlyle, and obviously with much more simplicity and sincerity.

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[1] *Ib. Letter* **34.**

II.

The course of young people in life is determined as much by their temperament as by their education; and in Matthew Arnold's case the temperament was unfavourable in many ways to development on the father's lines. The vehemence, the pietism, and the intolerance of the Rugby master had no place in him; and it would appear that the father was further disturbed by an apparent absence even of his own moral earnestness. "David, the son of Goliath," Mr. Swinburne (or another) called his fellow-poet, by way of suggesting that the child of light had a Philistine for his father. But, indeed, the young Arnold does not seem to have shown any great Apollonian inspiration, being distinguished chiefly for good spirits and a levity of manner which, as we learn from Lord Coleridge, pained and disappointed his father, who had no laughter in him, though the son, in his poem, "Rugby Chapel," speaks of his "radiant vigour" and "buoyant cheerfulness." The glimpses we get of the son at college, as in Clough's Memoirs, are of a cheerful youth of æsthetic tastes, who neither studied nor thought very hard, but exhibited sufficient self-confidence. His prize-poem, "Oliver Cromwell,"[3] however, though rather above the average of these paralysing performances (in which the English University system exhibits itself as far on the way to throttle that poetic faculty which, nevertheless, seems afterwards to flourish among University men), gives small hint of the freshness of touch and inspiration which later made him one of the most distinguished of English poets, though its theme is already significant of his complete adoption of his father's Liberalism. On the other hand, we gather from his own reminiscences, and from his verses, that he had tastes and tendencies little in accord with his father's ideals. In one essay,[1] he tells us how, when in his youth, he saw Rachel act in Edinburgh, he was so fascinated that he followed her to Paris, and went to see her play every time for two months. In another essay,[2] he tells how, when he came under the spell of George Sand, after reading her *Jeanne*, he determined to go to France and see the scenes of her novels, and straightway looked up one place in "Cassini's great map at the Bodleian Library." Put these episodes together with that of which we have some deeply-cut traces in the group of poems entitled "Switzerland," and you perceive an individuality touched with modern impulses and modern scepticisms, with æsthetic ardours and emotional aberrations, such as the headmaster of Rugby never harboured; a character and an ethic far enough from belief in a personal devil and horror at unevangelical periodicals for the poor.

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[1] Stanley's *Life of Dr. Arnold,* ch. vii., *Letters* 63, 75, 82; ch. viii., *Letter* 160.

[2] *Ib.* ch. ii., *Letter* 17; and Appendix D., extracts 1 and 6.

[3] Dated 1841, when he was nineteen years old.

The note of Arnold's youth seems to have been rather of psychological than of intellectual unrest. The drift of scientific criticism in religion he appreciated indirectly, listening unearnestly to the rationalists on the one hand, and to the Newmanites on the other. Ideas, then as always, reached him æsthetically: he did not spend much time over Strauss as did his friend Clough; and he had not the ascetic devotion that was needed to follow Newman. The master influence of his youth seems to have been Senancour, the author of "Obermann," whose teaching was a pessimism of the feelings, not of the understanding, a sincerer development of the melancholy of Chateaubriand,[3] a temper which, in either phase, is a more or less natural resumption of the note of Rousseau after the heart-shaking and nerve-exhausting strain of the Revolution. Thus poetry, which voices moods and feelings, was the natural utterance of Arnold before he came to middle age; and we doubtless owe to the conjunction of his sufficient, if not scientific, classical training at Rugby and Oxford, and to his appreciation of the emotional or æsthetic French writers of his day, that ripe and chastened art of diction which makes his most inspired verse unsurpassable in finish and fulness of music and meaning, and his prose always limpid and refined, and often of an Attic pregnancy and point. His culture, though not deep, was catholic, and took in Goethe and Heine, as well as Sainte-Beuve and Guérin; and he took from Goethe and Heine the forms of some of his most effective irregular blank verse. But as a prosist he learned most from the French,[1] acquiring from them that urbanity and amenity, that ease and naturalness which, once cultivated in England, had for a time gone out of fashion with us under the necessary stress of a development of ideas that could not be contained in Addisonian moulds. Thackeray, about the same time, with more need, learned as happily to temper his youthful English crudity by French example, as well as by reversion to our own Augustan types.

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[1] "On the French Play in London," *Irish Essays*, p. 210.

[2] "George Sand," in *Mixed Essays*.

[3] See Arnold's own intimate criticism in the note to his *Stanzas in Memory of the Author of "Obermann."*

But in recognising Arnold's debt to French culture, we must not overlook the distinct influence of his father, which once more illustrates that literary importance of early domestic example which we have noticed in Carlyle's imitation of his father and Emerson's imitation of his aunt. Dr. Arnold shows a plentiful lack of amenity in many of his letters; but in his Sermons and his Lectures on History you will find the obvious origins of the style of his son—the sensitive search for simplicity and temperance and clearness and flow, the crisp diffuseness of tissue, the balancing of clauses, and the reiteration of words and phrases in successive relations—characteristics evidently developed in the father by his function as a preacher to boys. And that combination of dignity with lucidity, which gave impressiveness to the discourses of the schoolmaster, lent to the writings of his son, where the same qualities were tempered with humour, an influence almost out of proportion to their purport. In the harsh strife of English schools and parties, full of echoes of Cobbett and the *Times*, and reminiscences of the malevolence of Junius and the violent invective of the later Burke, where even the penetrating criticism of Coleridge was touched with the *odium theologicum*, as was that of Macaulay with the heat of politics, and where the grave polemic of John Mill had visibly the dust of battle about it—in this atmosphere the serene brightness of Matthew Arnold's treatment of men and manners, of books and tendencies and movements, has had from the first a refreshing and exemplary charm. As a controversialist he is visibly infirm and inconclusive, and it was a sound instinct that led him to play the part lightly and indirectly; but when he does debate, he does it with a good-humour that makes much amends for loose logic and imperfect information. He could banter without indecorum and without bitterness, and scoff without bluster—French accomplishments, which he pressed on his countrymen both by precept and example. He has thus been more of a civiliser than a teacher; but such civilisers are rare and precious. And while his fastidious concern over things secondary, as if they were primary, has brought scoffing on himself, and his serene obstinacy has at times provoked impatience, the notes of grave melancholy as well as of grave fortitude which sound through so much of his verse have kept his standing high even for his opponents. Thus he was for his time one of the leading figures in intellectual England.

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[1] "M. Sainte-Beuve," he tells in his lecture on *Numbers*, "wrote to me in the last years of his life: *Vous avez traversé notre vie et notre littérature par une ligne intérieure, profonde, qui fait les initiés, et que vous ne perdrez jamais.*" And he calls Sainte-Beuve "one of my chief benefactors." *Discourses in America*, pp. 38-9.

On the other hand, these gifts and graces correlate with intellectual defects which, if never repellent, are finally serious. Among the things his strenuous father did not bequeath to him was the turn for hard work. Knowledge and accomplishments had to come easy to him; that is, they had to chime with his bent, if he was to receive them at all. In a late writing, commenting on the receptivity of an American lady critic, who confessed that it pleased her to think excellence was common and abundant, he says well that it is not so, and that to attain excellence a man must well-nigh wear his heart out. But even where he brought his taste and culture most happily to bear on his work, namely, in his poetry, he can at times be flat and uninspired, because he has not enough of the unweariable passion for perfection which goads the supreme artists. Lucky for him was his prolonged classic and other useful training at school and college, for he could not have cultured himself to the same effect. And where his English school and college training did not in any degree correct his intellectual defects, his want of logic and thoroughness of thought, he remained decidedly deficient to the end.

III.

We have seen in contemplating Carlyle and Emerson how, in order to reach a tenable and coherent philosophy of life and practice, there is needed an earnest and continuous effort after consistency as the final criterion of truth, an anxious regard for evidence, a steady watchfulness against the snares of prepossession and predilection. We have seen how Carlyle, for want of self-criticism and patience, was blown through life by the gusts of his temperament, so that he constantly stultified his own better principles and higher thoughts, and came to be, as a teacher, a mere vessel of wrath, beneficent only as an antidote to lethargy. We have seen how Emerson, with a much more benign temperament, alloyed his salutary gospel with a good deal of facile unwisdom, the result of lack of logical check and scientific care for the personal equation; and how he too failed to unify his thinking, remaining an obscurantist on the side of religion. Above all, we have seen, in the case of John Mill, how even a habit of reasoning may not wholly save a man from serious error through his leanings, though it will serve to give a saving measure of consistency to the bulk of his criticism of life. If, then, a man come to the criticism of life as Arnold did, with neither a faculty nor a training for logic, but only a delicate susceptibility and a cultured taste, it is impossible that he should escape frequent error and inconsistency, and reach sound moral science. He may see and correct some mental vices in his contemporaries, but he will inevitably suffer from some grave ones of his own. "If the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" as his father would say. It is really grotesque, if one will think of it, that men and women should reckon to reach accurate knowledge in mental and moral and historical science by the process of eking out somewhat their intuitions and their schooling and their prejudices, when in the natural sciences, as we see every day, an infinity of patience and comparison of evidence is needed to get at durable generalisations. A brotherhood of scientific men will spend years analysing a bucketful of mud from the bottom of the sea, microscoping every grain of it and separating its minute worlds of life, making mistakes and correcting them, and at worst putting on record a mass of hard facts for the generalisers to work upon. But in moral and social science, while a devoted few do work hard to colligate data and check theories, the mass of us come with our every-day convictions and lay down the law to each other with the unanimity and persuasiveness of an aviary. Arnold in later life was always satisfied with his intuitions, his first thoughts, his acquired ways of seeing things; and to the vast perplexity of human affairs he brought little more than a refined and humane judgment and a decided set of tastes. It was not merely that he never had any scientific training, though his father's views and his own on that head are significant.

> "If one might wish for impossibilities," wrote Dr. Arnold to an ex-pupil, "I might then wish that my children might be well versed in physical science, but in due subordination to the fulness and freshness of their knowledge on moral subjects. This, however, I believe cannot be; and physical science, if studied at all, seems too great to be studied ἐν παρέργῳ: wherefore, rather than have it the principal thing in my son's mind, I would gladly let him think that the sun went round the earth, and that the star

were so many spangles set in the bright blue firmament. Surely the one thing needful for a Christian and an Englishman to study is Christian and moral and political philosophy, and then we should see our way a little more clearly without falling into Judaism, or Toryism, or Jacobinism, or any other *ism* whatever."[1]

This extraordinary argument, which would exclude all knowledge of physical science from ordinary education, and leave its cultivation to an abandoned few, is somewhat modified in the son's late lecture on "Literature and Science;" but his dialectic on the thesis of literature *versus* science, as if they were incompatible, is little more edifying than his father's. He seems all his life to have regarded natural science with either indifference or suspicion. You remember Mr. Frederic Harrison's picture of him in their last skirmish, as a "well-preserved Ariel, tripping from flower to flower," who had always found science too difficult to take in. And on his own principle that we ought all to know the best that has been thought and said, he had no excuse for neglecting modern science, which everywhere trenches on the main problems of life and conduct.

But let us not fall into the assumption that a knowledge of physical science suffices to make a man scientific in his sociology. It is clear, as Arnold says with Wolf, that, "All learning is scientific which is systematically laid out and followed up to its original sources;"[2] and a scientific discipline of some sort might be got outside of physical science. It is very true again, as Professor Huxley urges, that, "An army without weapons of precision, and with no particular base of operations, might more hopefully enter upon a campaign on the Rhine, than a man, devoid of a knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century, upon a criticism of life." But the knowledge of what physical science has done is no security for soundness of criticism of life. A large measure of such knowledge leaves Professor Tyndall, for instance, very much at one in his political ideals with very unenlightened people; and a still larger measure of it leaves even

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[1] Stanley's *Life*, Ch. viii., *Letter* 133.

[2] *Discourses in America*, p. 87.

Professor Huxley's criticism of life characterised by lameness and inconclusiveness—qualities which, indeed, in the opinion of some, attach to his work in physical science. No, there is a scientific gift as well as a scientific training; and there is a gift for moral and social as well as for physical science; and though these gifts may at times be finely combined, as in Clifford, the combination is rare. The real drawback in Arnold's case is that he lacked the scientific gift in his own department. Even in his special province of literature, on which he has done some excellent writing and said many admirable things, he is arbitrary in his tastes, and methodless in his criticism. Very characteristic is his way of supporting his plea for an English Literary Academy. In order to show that the French Academy has fostered temperance and purity in French style, he sets an admittedly florid passage of Jeremy Taylor against an admittedly chaste passage from Bossuet; he picks out some of the coarsest sentences of Burke; and he compares what he confesses to be an extra trite sentence from Addison with a telling sentence from Joubert. Now, that, to use his own phraseology, is the method of the Barbarian and the Philistine, not the method of culture, which, in literary matters, is scientifically comparative. On his plan of selection you could prove any proposition you pleased, the negative as easily as the affirmative.

It is the reverse of surprising that a critic with such habits should fall into glaring self-contradictions. In the essay, "A Guide to English Literature,"[1] he writes that in Gray we are "never very far from" the "false style" exemplified in the second last stanza of the Elegy. In his lecture on Emerson[2] he credits Gray with "a diction generally pure in an age of impure diction." Most literary men agreed in the main with Mr. Swinburne in his traversing of Arnold's late dictum that the names of Wordsworth and Byron will stand highest among those of the English poets of the century when it closes. But, as it happens, Mr. Swinburne's vigorous depreciation of Byron can be reinforced by Arnold's earliest explanation of how "Byron's poetry had so little endurance in it" and is "so empty of matter."[1] And his literary affections were arbitrary as well as inconstant.

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[1] *Mixed Essays*, p. 201.

[2] *Discourses in America*, p. 157.

With a very different cast of mind from Emerson's, Arnold was very like Emerson in his reliance on his prepossessions; and the result is that even when there is something to be said for his thesis he leaves a careful reader scandalised by the levity and laxity with which he assumes he has proved it when he has only set it forth in terms of his tastes. When he would contrast the Catholic Church with Protestantism, to the disadvantage of the latter, he goes airily and wittily over the British sects, saying:[2] "Anglicanism suggests the English episcopate; Calvin's name suggests Dr. Candlish; Chalmers's, the Duke of Argyll; Channing's, Boston society; but Catholicism suggests—what shall I say—all the pell-mell of the men and women of Shakspere's plays." It is impossible to make comparisons more capriciously. On the one hand we have not even the general term Protestantism, but names of single men put ostentatiously; on the other, a general term of wide historical associations, which, again, are carefully selected from. It would be just as fair to say that Protestantism suggests all the pell-mell of men and women in Goldsmith, Fielding, Scott, Jane Austen, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, and Hawthorne; and that Catholicism suggests the rack, the stake, the Inquisition, filthy monks, devout Italian assassins, sham miracles, winking Virgins, profligate popes, and Lucrezia Borgia.

Arnold's habit of resting on prepossession, on the "secret augury," as Emerson would say, occasionally has amusing results of another kind. In his early pamphlet on "England and the Italian Question," published in 1859, he undertook to describe the position and prospects of the leading European powers, and here (pp. 33-34) is one of the summaries:—

> "Prussia is a great power only in name. . . . Prussia, with neither territory nor population enough for her support as a great military power, can only have a large efficient army at the expense of having her finances

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[1] *Essays in Criticism*, 3rd ed., pp. 7-8.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 228.

in ruin. She sensibly chooses to have her finances in prosperity. But her army, therefore, is a shadow. In her regular forces she has not a man who has served three full years. The majority of her *landwehr* are respectable married citizens, fathers of families. To require such troops to repel a charge of Zouaves would be as reasonable as to make this demand of the Marylebone Vestry. French military men know this perfectly well. They speak with great respect of the Austrian army. '*C'est une belle armée*,' they say of the Austrian army, '*mais elle est malheureuse;*' of the Prussian army they say, '*C'est une garde nationale.*'"

This was only seven years before the same Prussian army broke the Austrian army to pieces in a six weeks' campaign—only eleven years before Sedan. It is not easy to be further wrong than that. It was said of the late Earl of Derby—and some say the speaker was the present Earl of Derby—"You can trust his judgment where he is well informed, but then he never *is* well informed." We must not compare Arnold with Lord Derby, though Derby was a scholar; but what is true of the one is in a modified degree true of the other. In that matter of Greek scholarship, in which he may be thought of with Derby, his delicate appreciation did not amount to masterly knowledge. It is impossible to read his discussion with Professor Francis Newman on the translating of Homer without feeling that he had never, in Wolf's sense, systematically laid out his learning and followed it up to its original sources. He criticised Newman's translation unfairly, falling into his usual sin of selecting bad passages and giving them as samples, without attempting to estimate the general success; and on the question of Homer's archaisms, though Professor Newman's reply was needlessly warm, there could be no question that Arnold was discomfited. And some of his own translations, like Clough's, were artistically about as bad as anything hitherto achieved.

IV.

The same laxity of critical method, the same subordination of evidence and argument to private predilection, seems to me to characterise in a disastrous degree the main drift of his treatment of religious questions, though I am far from denying that his refined and unsectarian exposition of his ideas did much to elevate and even to rationalise religious thinking in this country. His eclecticism is an immense advance on the fanaticism of his father. And yet, just as he derived some of his worst, as well as his best, tendencies in politics from his father, so he follows his father's method with curious fidelity in much of his religious reasoning. In Dr. Arnold's sermon on "The Creation," for instance,[1] there is a piece of exegesis which might almost be read as a refined caricature of some of the religious argumentation of his son. The preacher tells how there is preserved in the Greek lexicographer, Suidas, a remarkable extract, from an old Etruscan author, giving an account of the creation of the universe, in which the Deity is represented as making the world in six thousand years; in the first thousand the heaven and the earth; in the second, the firmament; in the third, the sea; in the fourth, the sun, moon, and stars; in the fifth, all living things, except man; and in the sixth, man; while it is further intimated that as there were six thousand years before man was made, so mankind will last for six thousand more. Now, to an open-minded student, that Etruscan extract is a clear proof that the creation legend in Genesis is far older than the Hebrew scriptures, and that, somewhat in the Persian form, it had got as far west as Italy in very ancient times. But to Dr. Arnold it never occurs to deal with the matter in a scholarly or scientific spirit. He goes about to show his hearers that the Biblical version is plainly superior to the Pagan one. There is, he contends, the obvious mark of a true Scripture revelation[2] in the absence from the Bible of any mention of when the end is to be; and in the simple Biblical indication that "it is God who made us and not we ourselves;" and then he lays stress on the absence from the Etruscan account of the intimation that God gave men dominion over the animals. There is no word as to the possibility of a common origin of the creation stories. No credit is given to the Etruscan for *his* mention that the world was made by a God; no allowance is made for the fact that the passage cited is only a fragment; and that the Etruscan, too, might have talked about man having dominion over the animals. Take, again, Dr. Arnold's sermon on the story of Phinehas.[1] "Historically speaking," says the preacher, "I quite allow that the event recorded in the Twenty-fifth Chapter of Numbers is altogether extremely painful. But then that which forms its substance taken as history, is just its mere perishable form, when it is taken as Scripture. The wilderness of Arabia, the foreign manners and language, the licentiousness, the bloody punishment, all that is national and individual, Midian, Israel, Phinehas, the priest of the seed of Israel—we may drop all these from our consideration. There still remains the true and eternal Scriptural lesson." And so on. Now, the method or tactic there is Matthew Arnold's all over. Take away all the facts, and you have as much room for interpretation as you want. Read your own meaning into any old writing, and you can make it out to be supremely edifying.

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[1] *Sermons on Interpretation*, p. 2.

[2] And yet we find that in private he "did not hesitate to say that the account of Noah's deluge was evidently mythical, and the history of Joseph 'a beautiful poem.'" (F. W. Newman's *Phases of Faith*, 2nd ed., p. 68.) It is hard to reconcile this with his tone on the creation legend.

The father believed in a personal God, in a personal Devil, in the divinity of Jesus, in miracles, and in a resurrection; the son believed in none of these things, but he retained a predilection for what his father called the Scriptural, and he makes out his case for that just as inexpensively as his father did.[2] Having acquired the habit of resting his moral sense on the Bible, he made it the business of his latter years to prop up the decaying credit of that compilation by proclaiming that nowhere else so well as there can men find exemplified the temper which craves after righteousness. "The Jewish nation," he would have us believe, attached "preeminent, unique importance" to *righteousness;*[1] though he allows that they conceived it amiss. Then where is their advantage? As the student knows, the Jews had no more genius for righteousness, for justice, than any other ancient people,[2] no more than the Persians and the Egyptians, decidedly less than the Greeks and Romans. The very fact that righteousness for them came to mean obeying a sacerdotal law is the proof of their inferiority: the occasional passionate cry of their prophets for social rectitude is the measure of their lack of it as a community. But Arnold's tastes and habits lay in the direction of the Scriptural, and his tastes made his arguments. Continental Liberals expressed their astonishment at his aims; and he, loyal to his mission of warning his countrymen against this insularity—a mission which, like others, he caught in part from his father[3]—fully recognised that the Continental Liberals were against him. "The partisans of traditional religion in this country," he wrote, "do not know, I think, how decisively the whole force of progressive and liberal opinion on the Continent has pronounced against the Christian religion."[4] But the expostulations of the Continental Liberals had no weight with him. Professor Gubernatis, the most accomplished man in Italy, as Arnold remarked, was one of those who declared his astonishment. He expressed the feeling of educated Italians about the Bible, and added: "It is strange that the human genius should take pleasure in combating in such narrow lists, with such treacherous ground under one's feet, with such a cloudy sky over one's head; —and all this in the name of freedom of discussion."[5] Arnold serenely quotes all that, and then he disposes of Gubernatis by a characteristic subterfuge. What, asked the Italian, should we say if Plato had based his Republic upon a text of Hesiod? "That is to say," answers Arnold, "the Bible has no more solidity and value, as a basis for human life, than the *Theogony.*" Obviously, it is saying no such thing. Hesiod wrote the *Works and Days* as well as the *Theogony.* But in any case, the argument of Gubernatis was not that Hesiod was as good as the Bible, but that Plato, seeking to frame a rule of life for his age, looked for it in his reason and experience, and not in the ancient sacred books of his people—not in Homer any more than in Hesiod. One sophism, however, is as good as another to vindicate a rooted prejudice; and if Arnold were met on one, he had a dozen more in stock. When he is met by the suggestion that modern knowledge has surely as much light for men as the ignorance of ancient Palestine, he has his answer ready. "Take," he says, "a course of the Bible first, and then a course of Benjamin Franklin, Horace Greeley, Jeremy Bentham, and Mr. Herbert Spencer; see which has most effect, which satisfies you most, which gives you most moral force."[1] That, it would seem, is the kind of critical righteousness that is developed under Hebrew tutelage. Is it worth while answering that you might take a course of Sir Thomas Browne, Burke, Charles Lamb, Emerson, Landor, Goethe, Mill, George Eliot, Clifford, Tylor, and Ruskin, and that these may be found to give considerably more moral force and satisfaction than the Bible as a whole, not to say a course of Leviticus, Kings and Chronicles, Proverbs, Jeremiah, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Apocalypse? "Plato says," Arnold tells us,[2] "with most profound truth: 'The man who would think to good purpose must be able to take many things into his view together.'" It is most true; and how hard the saying hits him who quotes it!

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[1] Vol. cited, p. 71.

[2] It is noteworthy that he followed his father in founding principally on the Fourth Gospel, in which Dr. Arnold saw the work of an eye-witness! Cf. Prof. Newman's *Phases of Faith*, p. 81, and *Literature and Dogma*, 5th ed., pp. 174-5.

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[1] *Last Essays on Church and Religion,* Pref. p. xviii.; *Literature and Dogma,* ch. i.

[2] Compare Mr. Gladstone's recent admission (*Landmarks of Homeric Study,* p. 95) that their early history shows them to have been below the level of the Homeric Greeks; and contrast their early records with those of the Chinese on the point of the moral sense proper.

[3] See below, p. 161. [4] *Last Essays,* pp. xi-xii. [5] *Ib.,* p. x.

What Arnold did with the Bible was to form an abstract or ideal conception of a people which he called Israel, and to assume that this people was penetrated at all times, or at least till near the time of its fall, by those moral or religious notions which, in the Old Testament books, most impressed his own religious and moral sense. We must not call this a delusion of sheer ignorance, for it often seems to be shared by M. Renan, who must know better; but in Arnold's case the delusion seems from the outset to have barred knowledge of the facts. It is not merely that he takes the conventional and illiterate view of the Bible documents, accepting the "law" as coming down from Moses, and basing his notion of Jewish life on the chimeras of post-exilic forgery. He cannot, or rather will not, even read the plainest lessons of the books as they stand. He refers to Kuenen, but he learned nothing from Kuenen. Kuenen could have showed him, as the Bible could have showed him, that the Israelites remained habitual polytheists, with "all sorts of immorality," to use his own phrase, at least till the exile; and if he had sought historic science, and not the mere solace of his prepossessions, he would have recognised that the Hebrews' monotheism and law are largely drawn from the races which conquered them. But he had his fancy to propitiate and his tastes to promulgate, and so for him the polytheistic Hebrews, with their multitudinous polytheistic rites and gross superstitions, corresponding to those of their Semitic neighbours, become a visionary "Israel," which with mysterious racial felicity had uniquely conceived of God as an "Eternal Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness"—the meaning of Israelite righteousness being at this point left tastefully vague. That conception is as far from historic fact, as purely a fairy-tale, as any of those other hallucinations which he calls such and smiles at. Probably no book was ever written in which there is so much of the air of judgment and moderation as appears in *Literature and Dogma*, with such a deep defect of real judgment and painstaking in essentials. It is the work of a gifted man whose relation to the world of fact is in certain directions wholly fantastic. Only so far did he possess the sense of reality as it was developed in him by a loosely eclectic literary culture; for with all his stipulation for methodical reading he does not appear ever to have done any. His conceptions of religious history were such as might have been formed by Shelley, or by any fanciful and sympathetic mind delivered from vulgar and dogmatic beliefs in the period before scientific Biblical scholarship. Living at a time when such scholarship was considerably advanced, he in no degree absorbed it: on the contrary, when it first came before him he recoiled from it and denounced it. Against Colenso's book he made the extraordinary protest that it should have been written in Latin, so that only the leisured clergy should read it. The demand was childish at best, for if Colenso had written in Latin he would inevitably have been translated and popularised all the same; but even in Latin he would have just as much outraged those capricious sensibilities which were the beginning and the end of Arnold's judgments. He never attempted to estimate the real significance of what Colenso did; he could only disparage it, with as much heat as he ever allowed himself. "It is really," he wrote, "the strongest possible proof of the low ebb at which in England the critical spirit is, that while the critical hit in the religious literature of Germany is Dr. Strauss's book, in that of France M. Renan's book, the book of Bishop Colenso is the critical hit in the religious literature of England. Bishop Colenso's book reposes on a total misconception of the essential elements of the religious problem, as the problem is now presented for solution." [1] That is to say, Colenso was interested in historical facts which Arnold was not interested in, though he made a parade of admitting the vital importance of a knowledge of these; [2] and he saw that Colenso's criticism was shaking the sacrosanct prestige of his beloved Bible. He goes on to make some dubious concessions to Renan's book, by way of setting it at least above Colenso's; but, significantly enough, he does not proceed to describe or define Strauss's. In point of fact, his objections to Colenso, such as they were, must logically strike equally at Strauss; and, since Colenso and the English public must for the purpose of the moment be put below Strauss and the German, Strauss's book is discreetly left unanalysed. And in the end he stultifies his own objection to Colenso. "There is truth of science," he sums up, "and truth of religion; truth of science does not become truth of religion till it is made religious. . . . Let us have all the science there is from the men of science; from the men of religion let us have religion." [3] Then is an English bishop to be professionally devoid of science? Colenso brought some truth of science, and Arnold scouted it, though it left him theoretically free to go on framing his truth of religion. But the established practice is to make so-called truth of religion out of falsehood in science; and this it was Arnold's predilection to go on doing in some main matters while he was against it in others.[1]

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[1] *Literature and Dogma*, 5th ed., p. 338.

[2] *Nineteenth Century*, Feb., 1885, p. 236.

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[1] *Essays in Criticism*, 3rd. ed., p. 35.

[2] *Literature and Dogma*, pref., p. xxiii. [3] *Essays in Criticism*, p. 33, *note*,

We can see him, as it were, inwardly determining, like a clever child, that he will make out his case by hook or by crook. He cannot help hearing it said that the Hebrew ideal of righteousness was a very poor affair; and when he comes to the point he cannot deny it. "Evil, for them, did not take in all faults whatever of heart and conduct, but meant chiefly oppression, graspingness, a violent mendacious tongue, insolent and riotous excess. True; their conception of righteousness *was* much of this kind, and it was narrow."[2] That is to say, Hebrew ethics were much the same as those of any other primitive people, ancient or modern. On this the thesis is recast for the purpose of the moment thus: "Whoever sincerely attends to *conduct*, along however limited a line, is on his way to bring under the eye of conscience all conduct whatever."[3] Now, that proposition is, for candid disputants, an admission that the Jews were not otherwise moral or righteous than any other people; for nothing is more certain than that every people has sincerely attended to conduct, if you allow the restriction "along however limited a line." But Arnold, having surrendered his case, goes on with his exposition as if nothing had happened. Nay, he claims that he has made his position stronger. "It is objected, finally, that even their own narrow conception of righteousness this people could not follow, but were perpetually oppressive, grasping, slanderous, sensual; why, the very interest and importance of their witness to righteousness lies in their having *felt so deeply the necessity of what they were so little able to accomplish*" ! ! !

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[1] Very significant is his admission, in a late report to the Education Department ("On certain points connected with Elementary Education in Germany, Switzerland, and France," 1886), as to how "languidly" he listened to the moral instruction in the French schools, having made up his mind that it must be ineffective because non-religious.

[2] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 56; *cf.* pp. 84, 87; and *Last Essays*, pref. p. xviii.

[3] Compare this with the fling at the conscientious Dissenter, as "not knowing that with conscience he has done nothing until he has got to the bottom of conscience, and made it tell him *right*" (work cited, p. 223). A formula for every emergency! Contrast again the admissions in the *Discourses in America*, pp. 105-7.

The "they" here is characteristic of the book. The historic fact is that certain isolated Hebrews, at long intervals, testified against Hebrew misconduct, as Roman writers did against the vices of Romans, and as English and French writers do against those of their countrymen. On Arnold's principle, the prevalence of a love of strict morality among the Romans is proved by the writings of Juvenal and Tacitus; and the works of Carlyle and Ruskin testify to the modern English passion for righteousness and refinement of life. The fallacy is beneath refutation; and yet Arnold was to the last its dupe; seeing in the protests of Plato and Socrates the witnesses to Greek imperfection, and in the invective of the Hebrew prophets a proof that the Hebrews in general had a genius for morals. And in order to enforce his criticism of Free Love as "fatal to progress" (a view which did not affect his admiration of George Sand), he gives the Jews credit for an innate rightness of view on sexual matters, while admitting their polygamy.[1]

On such a system of interpretation it matters little whether you have or have not any sound knowledge of your subject-matter to start with; your conclusions will be worthless either way. Arnold, following the chimerical traditional view, confesses that "the Israelites, when they lost their *primary intuition* and the deep feeling which went with it, were perpetually idolatrous;"[2] though nothing is better established than that Judaism rose in pure polytheism and idolatry, and that only after the exile did the priesthood effectually repress idolatry, after Persian example. But if he had been as well informed as he was ignorant of the historic facts, his lawless self-will would have made him an untrustworthy guide. Whatever his data, he would have made out just what he had a mind to. His hope for himself in religious matters was that "minds with small aptitude for abstruse reasoning may yet, through letters, gain some hold on sound judgment and useful knowledge, and may even clear up blunders committed, out of their very excess of talent, by the athletes of logic."[1] That suggestion that men can err by being too logical, carries in it the promise of all his own fallacies and failures.

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[1] *God and the Bible*, pp. 153-5. Cf. *Literature and Dogma*, p. 38.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 86. *Cf.*, p. 192, etc.

When he comes down to the New Testament and Jesus, his genial method becomes so transparent as almost to supersede hostile criticism. He has an imaginary Jesus as he had an imaginary Israel. Jesus must be for him the incarnation of sweet reasonableness,[2] and there is to be a "consummate justness in what he said, perfect balance, unerring felicity."[3] The critic, he knows, will point out that Jesus in the Gospels is often a very different person from this, often grossly unreasonable, bitter, unjust, unbalanced, infelicitous. But the answer is as simple as usual: all these awkward passages are set aside by Mr. Arnold, and ought to be set aside by other people. "It is felt that anything exaggerated, distorted, false, *cannot be from Jesus;* that it must be human (*sic*) perversion."[4] In fine, we have one more fairy tale in place of the old ones. M. Renan's book, according to Dr. Pusey, is an agreeable romance; but Mr. Arnold did not appreciate it—his taste in romance, oddly enough, was for George Sand. So, not being disposed to write another romance, he wrote an agreeable treatise, embodying didactically his own dream on the subject; and, instead of the fairy tale of the three Lord Shaftesburys, as he calls the doctrine of the Trinity, we have the fairy tale of, shall we say, one Matthew Arnold?

It is impossible to doubt that this dream and doctrine will disappear from the philosophy of the civilised world; though Arnold's winning and noiselessly persistent way of expounding them has certainly given them much vogue, in a form which grows inevitably less refined than his. After his graceful tenacity we have the forcible feebleness of hysterical rhetoricians and eclectics infirm of purpose, who are not the sort of converts he wanted to make. Like the typical selectors of sweetness, he did not labour for himself. The men and women of balance and earnestness, whom he wanted to persuade, he did, indeed, often lead with irresistible attraction out of their dead dogmatic beliefs, but not to find a continuing city in his personal equation. As he so often says, with a pathetic unconsciousness of the full force of his words, our business in our intellectual life is to see the thing as it is, so far as may be. "In the end," he says again, "the victory belongs to facts, and he who contradicts them finds that he runs his head against a wall."[1] Only that can survive, he says again, which is verified or verifiable. Well, his Judaism and his Jesuism are alike unverifiable: nay, they are alike disproved.

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[1] *Literature and Dogma,* Introd., p. 9. [2] *Literature and Dogma,* passim.
[2] *Last Essays,* pref., p. xxiv. [4] *Ib.*; Cf. *Literature and Dogma,* ch. vi.

V.

Taking Arnold's career, then, as a whole, we find it to conform somewhat remarkably, in what we may call its formula, to that of Carlyle, who was so different from Arnold in temper and tastes. Both men came to the criticism of life with views which their early culture carried a considerable way ahead of those of their fathers; but after their period of receptive culture was over, having had no preparation therein for the application of right intellectual methods to their problems, their work consisted in giving literary effect to their predilections by processes which might persuade, but could never prove. Reducing all facts to their personal equation, and attempting no correction of their intuitions by the test of universal consistency, they figure as prophets, men with a mission, not as thinkers, or demonstrators of truth. And though Arnold's happier disposition and better balance made his intellectual egoism attractive where Carlyle's was repellent, he too furnishes a memorable example of the retrogressive tendency of a life of mere obedience, however considerate, to inherited emotional bias. As the Carlyle of later life is much nearer the intellectual sphere of his father than the Carlyle of the studious and receptive period, so Matthew Arnold comes visibly nearer the positions of Dr. Arnold as he grows older. Nay, more, we shall see that in his politics, without absolutely gainsaying his best teachings, he came to put forward doctrines, some of which shock and repel the civilised spirit, and some of which his father would have denounced as heartless. One of Arnold's last performances as a religionist was his tractate on Isaiah, and in that he is seen in a stage that may almost be described as intellectual ossification. Hebraists admit the almost hopeless corruption of the passage of Isaiah which in the Authorised Version is translated: "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood." The one thing certain about the passage is that this translation is quite wrong. But Arnold, who had begun by arguing that we cannot give up the Bible as a stay of morals, now feels that he cannot give up a mistranslation of an entirely non-moral and indeed meaningless sentence in Isaiah, because the verbal movement and rhetorical effect of the mistranslation are so satisfying; and he votes for the old version, however far it may be from the true meaning. That is what the predilection for the Scriptural ultimately comes to, the old lady's affection for "that blessed word Mesopotamia," as I think was observed by every critic who reviewed the essay on its publication. It is quite a sequent development. The notion that on one ancient literature alone can modern civilisation find a moral stay—this is already on the way to superstition, to a species of fetichism akin to that which worships the Bible as a sort of amulet; and the belief in the magical virtue of meaningless sentences and cadences, as a stay of the literary sense and the spirit of culture, is a strict consequence. And since all this is a subservience to instinct and habit, after the manner of periods in which we can see the human mind to have weakened and stiffened for lack of the food of new truth, it is the reverse of surprising that with the intellectual there is found to go on a moral retrogression, a return to certain passions and instincts and ideals which belong to earlier and lower culture planes. The mature Arnold is a Chauvinist as well as a Scripturalist.

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[1] *Last Essays*, pref., p. xv.

VI.

I have said that Arnold caught in part from his father his mission of warning his countrymen against their insular shortcomings. Dr. Arnold learned to compare England with the Continent from his travels as well as from his reading, and the young Matthew, travelling with his parents and brothers, would early learn to see things with his father's eyes. In both the bias of criticism had to struggle with the bias of patriotism. Dr. Arnold, travelling in 1830, comments in his journal on Guizot's claim that France produced more advanced and enlarged individual minds than England.

> "Many Englishmen will sneer at this notion, but I think it is in a certain degree well founded, and that our intellectual eminence in modern times by no means keeps pace with our advances in all the comforts and effectiveness of society. And I have no doubt that our miserable system of education has a great deal to do with it. I maintain that our historians ought to be twice as good as those of any other nation, because our social civilisation is perfect. . . . Then, again, our habits of active life give our minds an enormous advantage, if we would work; but we do not, and therefore the history of our own country is at this day a thing to be done, as well as the histories of Greece and Rome. Foreigners say that our insular situation crams and narrows our minds; and this is not mere nonsense either. If we were not physically a very active people, our disunion from the Continent would make us pretty nearly as bad as the Chinese."[1]

Not satisfied with assuring himself that all the while "our social civilisation is perfect," Dr. Arnold goes on to declare that "A thorough English gentleman—Christian, manly, and enlightened, is more, I believe, than Guizot or Sismondi could comprehend; it is a finer sentiment of human nature than any other country, I believe, could furnish. Still," he again concedes, "it is not a perfect specimen by a great deal." And yet again he complains that "our travellers and our exquisites imitate the outsides of foreign customs without discrimination, just as in the absurd fashion of not eating fish with a knife, borrowed from the French, who do it because they have no knives fit to use." And again, nine years later, comparing France with England, he avows that it seems to him "that according to the ordinary laws of God's Providence, the state of France is more hopeful for the future;" and that its "society in its main points is more stable;" and that thus "religious and moral truth" may there work beneficent results "whenever it shall please God." "Whereas, in England, what moral power, without a direct and manifest interposition of God, can overcome the physical difficulties of our state of population and property?" But at the same time he declares that if England perishes, "there perishes the most active and noble life which the world has ever yet seen;" and, however great may be the evils of her state as compared with that of France, "yet one cannot but see also, that the English are a greater people than these—more like, that is, one of the chosen peoples of history, who are appointed to do a great work for mankind."[1] And so on, with much vain repetition of the words God and Providence. In these ebbings and flowings of sentiment, unreconciled by any wider generalisation, we have a singularly complete outline of the much more prolonged and elaborated criticism of the son on English and European conditions and prospects.

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[1] *Life*, Appendix D., Tour vi., extract 8.

In his youth, while his æsthetic bent predominated and his moral convictions were comparatively latent, we find him chiefly awake to the shortcomings of his countrymen; and it is as a foe to the patriotic bias, and a representative of what Mr. Spencer calls the anti-patriotic bias, that he first comes into general notice as a prose writer. Far from thinking that "our social civilisation is perfect," he assailed it at a hundred points with satire, with irony, with banter, with argument; and if the argument is incomplex, the banter is excellent. Even where he most flagrantly generalises from random particulars, his shot often tells. Who will ever for-

[1] *Life*, Tour ix., extracts 2 and 7.

get the capital made of the name of the infanticidal girl Wragg, and of the official formula, "Wragg is in custody"? As an argument, the thing might serve for a typical case of fallacy in a logic manual; and yet somehow it makes its point. And with all the transparent superficiality of the reasoning, the audacious substitution of particulars for generals, the jaunty assumption of non-existent knowledge, there can be no doubt that Arnold did excellent work by his gibes and flings at British self-sufficiency, just as he did excellent work by his urbane crusade against dogmatic unreason; because the majority of orthodox and complacently nationalistic people are not exact or habitual reasoners, and primarily need unsettling and awaking, not precise science, which would mostly glance off them in that stage. In his delicately breezy way, Arnold set them all doubting and fidgetting, and their first tart rejoinders left him unruffled and undiscouraged. Some of the rejoinders of better-informed people, indeed, might have sufficed to nonplus any man less perfectly satisfied with his intuitions. There is a dreadful air of completeness in Mr. Spencer's calm demonstration that Arnold did not know what he was talking about when he declared the English to be deficient in ideas in comparison with the French. And yet there remains a truth in Arnold's contention which Mr. Spencer did not exactly deal with; and we shall see hereafter that in that very connection Mr. Spencer was led to commit himself to a proposition about ideas and practice which later he is moved to deny in his conflict with Comte. There remains a sense in which it is true that large numbers of Englishmen scout ideas, while Frenchmen commonly welcome them—the ideas in question being those which systematise facts in general and history in particular. And one could wish that Arnold were alive to-day to impress once more on his countrymen—if only he would now see it[1]—how far they remain behind

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[1] In the Educational Report of 1886, before cited, he lays it down that the ideal of Comenius "to train generally all who are born men to all which is human," "does in some considerable degree govern the proceedings of popular schools in German countries, and now in France also, but in England hardly at all."

France in their cultivation of important branches of historical research. In what we clumsily call Comparative Religion, for instance, but especially in the rational analysis of Christian origins, the French have for twenty years been doing a great deal more of good work than we, and are now far on the way to distancing the Germans. And the multiplication of French universities once more proves the openness of the French mind to ideas which here find slow and difficult acceptance. But in his latter days, Arnold's eye had come to be able to miss these things.

VII.

Certainly it is vain to look to Arnold for either a consistent analysis or a connected explanation of our national tendencies, good or bad. As Mr. Harrison put it long ago, in a phrase which his antagonist frequently quotes in his smiling way, we look in vain to him for a set of principles "interdependent, subordinate, derivative;" and in the same smiling way he tells us how "philosophy has always been getting me into trouble," and how he has been taunted with his lack of faculty for abstruse reasoning. When he goes about a classification it is sure to be catching, but as sure to be superficial. Such a classification is his famous one of his countrymen, "an upper class materialised, a middle class vulgarised, a lower class brutalised;" or in the other formula, Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace. Clearly there is nothing scientific here; no real study of the effects of different conditions in producing class types; and yet how clever the naming is, and how near it comes in places to hitting off those effects. If you ask whether the middle class is not just as much materialised as vulgarised, and whether the upper class has not in a high degree the quality attributed to the populace, that of longing to crush opposition by brute force, the looseness of the discrimination appears clearly enough. Arnold admitted that the Philistine approximates to the Barbarian and to the Populace; but that will not save his classification. "Every time," he says, "that we match up a vehement opinion in ignorance and passion, every time that we long to crush an adversary by sheer violence, every time that we are envious, every time that we are brutal," we have found in our own bosom "the eternal spirit of the populace."[1] Now, these are not the characteristics of our industrial populace collectively: they are much more obviously the characteristics of the upper and middle classes in political affairs. They were the characteristics of the Roman and the Greek populace, which was in large part enslaved and disdained; but Arnold forgot that our very different industrial system, with all its evils, must have altered the political tendencies of the people. With us it is not in general the advocate or the supporter of violence and coercion: these are the tastes of the upper class in especial, and of the middle class next. And yet it remains true that our industrial conditions have the effect of keeping our masses crude and undeveloped; that our middle classes are largely vulgar in the sense of cherishing ideals not higher than those of the lower, but only more extensive, in terms of their larger incomes; and that our upper or idle classes, with all their opportunities, are not in the mass any higher in their ideals; are essentially materialised, in Arnold's phrase; and are only on the material side and on the surface more refined than the others. We may say, in fine, that our whole civilisation is materialised, and that the classes in the lump vary only in their polish and manners and plane of material indulgence. In all classes alike there rages the rude passion for what they call sport, for the crudest excitements that the law will permit; and among the highest as among the lowest the ideal of such excitement is a murderous prize fight. Horse-racing, which may be termed the national recreation, is supported by all; and Lord Hartington and Lord Rosebery and Lord Randolph Churchill are as sincerely interested in these matters, after their different fashions, as their grooms. Thus, as Arnold put it in his chastened way, our upper class in the main is "a little inaccessible to ideas and light," though Lord Rosebery is certainly an exception.

[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 107-8.

These deficiencies it is Arnold's service to have pressed on his countrymen with an amiable implacability. In plans for social reconstruction, certainly, he was not rife: his function was to impugn and satirise, to awaken those sunk in orthodoxy and insularity, not to show them how to make a new society. But it was much to have begun the crusade, not with Carlyle, in the name merely of a too well-known God, but in the name of human civilisation and culture. If only Arnold had been as much superior to Carlyle in consistency and science, and therefore in genuine lucidity, as he was in temper and literary limpidity, he would have been not merely a great, but the greatest of our modern social reformers. But when we name consistency, we name the quality which will always be lacking to the men of mere intuition, who begin and end with the inward augury.

Let us take first some of his own prescriptions in practical politics. In his *Culture and Anarchy*, in one of many references to Mr. Bradlaugh as a leader and representative of the populace, he recommends to his reflection this maxim from his own favourite Bishop Wilson: "Intemperance in talk makes a dreadful havoc in the heart."[1] This citation was made *à propos* of Mr. Bradlaugh's early protests against misrule in general, and, apparently, in particular against his action in connection with the closing of Hyde Park to public meetings in 1866. Now, how does Arnold himself deliberately propose to deal with public disturbances such as those in connection with that attempt to suppress the right of public meeting? In cold blood, not in a public speech, but in a calmly-penned essay, he tells us that in an unpublished letter of his father's, written long ago, when the country was very ill-governed, and there were riots in many places—in this letter, while insisting strongly on the folly and badness of the Government, Dr. Arnold had concluded thus:—"As for rioting, the old Roman way of dealing with *that* is always the right one; flog the rank and file, and fling the ringleaders from the Tarpeian Rock." "And this opinion," adds his son, "we can never forsake."[2] And this is the man who warns a democratic leader against having his heart hardened by intemperate talk. So gross is the brutality, and so suave is the manner of its utterance, that we hesitate whether we shall take it seriously. But there can be no reasonable doubt that both father and son meant what they said, and would have pressed their counsel in practice, joining their voices with those of the most insensate haters of the populace, if the issue could have been seriously raised. And I invite your attention to this as one more result of the ethical bias which takes its cues from ancient Scriptures, and the inward light that is given by the spirit of inherited barbarism. The most odiously irrational advice ever given to a modern British Government in a time of perturbation comes from a professed cultivator of sweetness and light, echoing a dictum which, even in the darkened time when it was first pronounced, was stupidly, insanely cruel. Need I say that Mr. Bradlaugh would have recoiled with horror from such a political counsel under any circumstances; and that never in his whole career, under the extremest provocation and excitement, did he say anything that could be compared for intemperance with that smooth atrocity of his critic? And need I repeat that the promulgation of this precept about the lash and the Tarpeian Rock is a proof that the so-called spirit of the populace, the spirit which seeks to crush opposition by violence, is essentially the spirit of the English upper-class, justly termed barbarian? Rioting is indeed a serious matter, but as a sign of hardness of heart it is to these Arnoldian maxims precisely what passion is to cold malignity. The "riot" in question was grossly exaggerated; but at worst those concerned had acted on Arnold's own maxim, of "Force till Right is Ready;" and, what is more, their action had the right results. They had given his maxim its only legitimate application.

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[1] *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 87.

[2] *Ib.* p. 258.

Arnold, in his smiling way, avowed that he was by rights a Philistine, though he had broken with his class; but that every time he took a gun or rod in his hand he felt that he had in him something of the barbarian; and that if he had had a large estate he too might have been "a little inaccessible to ideas and light." It is to be feared that a middle-class income will not save a man from being inaccessible to certain ideas, and from being a bit of a barbarian in a larger sense than that of a cultivator of field sports. For as Arnold grew older he conformed more and not less to the ideals of the barbarian class, till he came to present a strange mixture of gospels indeed. It is in one of his late political essays that he jeers at that English Government which, after the defeat of Majuba Hill, had the courage to refrain from further "blood-guiltiness" in what it recognised to have been an unjust war. For Arnold, the proper policy was to continue the war, right or wrong, and crush the Boers who had had the audacity to resist and beat us.[1] And it is in the same essay that, after bantering Mr. Harrison about having "in the exuberance of youthful energy weighted himself for the race of life by taking up a grotesque old French pedant upon his shoulders," and then "in middle age taking up the Protestant Dissenters too," he goes on: "And now, when he is becoming elderly, it seems as if nothing would serve him but he must add the Peace Society to his load."[2] This *flaneur*, remember, who gibes at a Government that recoils from blood-guiltiness, and jeers at the aims of the Peace Society, is the same moralist who observed that "Dissent, as a religious movement of our day, would be almost droll, if it were not, from the tempers and actions it excites, so extremely irreligious,"[3] and that our Dissenters' temper is "profoundly unchristian;" the moralist who exhorts us to "attend to conduct" and guard against letting our lusts rule us.[4]

What are we to say of this spectacle of combined pietism and barbarism, this parade of the sweet reasonableness of Jesus in one book and this flaunting of the gospel of bloodshed and hate in another? It is hard to maintain respect for the pietist, for the moralist, when you see how worthless is his ethic as a means of rightly controlling his own conduct in the gravest crises of public life. It is hard to think of him otherwise than as the "well-preserved Ariel, tripping from flower to flower," the preacher whose religion is a pose, and whose humanitarianism is a veneer of urbanity over the tastes of the mess-room. Who, after that consummation of neo-Judaism and neo-Jesuism, can doubt that the developed instincts of civilisation and science are better guides than the religion of sentimentalism which, for these fifteen hundred years, under one guise or another, has allied itself with all the worst leanings of the human heart, while claiming to be the one means of casting out sin?

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[1] "A Word more about America," in *Nineteenth Century*, Feb., 1885, p. 230.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 229.

[3] *Literature and Dogma*, Pref., p. xi.

[4] *Ib.*, p. 370.

VIII.

It becomes a serious necessity to dwell on these miscarriages of the ethics of mere literary taste and literary sanction. To an ingenuous mind, few things are more captivating or compulsive than the tone of Arnold in his character of moralist, speaking with benign gravity of the Hebrew passion for righteousness, and of the secret of Jesus; and admonishing his race in an improved rendering of Paul: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are elevated, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, have these in your mind; let your thoughts run upon these."[1] It seems the very accent of sweet reasonableness, of the teacher with a genius for morals. But what are all these counsels but a string of empty shibboleths if you do not clearly know what the words connote? Righteousness and truth! yes, in the name of humanity let us have them: the world is perishing for lack of them. But what *are* righteousness and truth; and how are we to determine what deserves to be of good report? If "whatsoever things are amiable" is to include the Tarpeian Rock and the lash for men exasperated into transient riot by tyrannous denial of their ancient rights, what is the worth of the air of benignity and the sanctified intonation? If truth is to mean inspired mistranslation and the systematic falsifying of religious history in the interests of sentiment; and if righteousness is to mean the cold-blooded urging of iniquitous wars in the name of national prestige, what better is all this mellifluous morality than the tender mercies of the wicked? Yet so docile are our minds to the mere verbiage of morality and the mere odour of sanctity, that I doubt not this impeachment will sound as unregenerate brawling to some who have come under the Arnoldian spell. And the likelihood is the more, because Arnold is at times really on the side of a sympathetic as against a barbarian ethic. It must always be remembered to his honour that his tastes and instincts led him from the first to appeal for justice for Ireland; and kept him almost to the last an advocate of equality, alive to what he termed the "idolatrous work" in the social system built and conserved by our middle and upper classes. And, as we have acknowledged, his indictments of our civilisation have again and again convinced the educated sense. It results from all this that when such an authority is seen to go astray even grossly, men are slow to call its unrighteousness by that name, and indisposed to believe that the habit of mind which ended so can be fundamentally untrustworthy, seeing that it had so often a happier outcome. The more need that the "devil's advocate" should callously insist. I give you this saying: that what we term a primary instinct for righteousness is only the personal or tribal idiosyncrasy chancing to seem righteous in our eyes; and that you only begin to have some measure of security for a consistent righteousness, when every instinct, every feeling, every impulse, is checked by that further qualifying instinct, feeling, or impulse, which stipulates for consistency and for the correlative feelings of all others concerned in the case. Reason, remember, is only the comparison of our feeling, so-called, with other feelings which prompt differently from the first, to the end of acting on the general view and not on the first impulse. Moral progress is established by the promotion of certain results of this habit of comparison, as it were, to the primary stage of being a matter of course; and thus it can be that men who do not themselves cultivate the habit of checking impulse by consideration, feeling by feeling, may yet present a set of impulses in large part social and beneficent. But the eternal conflict from which issues moral advance is always being set up anew when such men act as confidently on an unsocial and maleficent bias as on what they and others agree to be a good one. Then their life-long habit of confident moral dogmatism, strong in manifold sanction, makes them the very bulwarks of evil, just because they cannot conceive that they and evil can ever be associated. We thus come once more to the old discovery that the past can never lay down the morality of the present; that the morality of the past is always becoming in some particulars the immorality of the present, just as the faith of the past is always becoming a present incredibility. And if any idealist, hearing this, remains loth to listen to what seems a desolating gospel, I will repeat it in the words of an idealist:—"He who would gather immortal palms must not be dismayed by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind." Sacred, that is, to you, as being the last standard. And if by a hard fate your standard is refuted by later and better ones, yours must just be discredited, and if need be, denounced. Science can have no leniences, save that all-embracing tolerance which enfolds alike the good and the bad, the sane and the insane.

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[1] *Discourses in America*, p. 30.

For there is such a scientific tolerance, as we acknowledged before, over the spectacle of Carlyle. It should come into play the moment that critical demonstration is over. And here, be it noted, the tolerance of science will embrace Arnold in his own despite. When we say that science can have no leniences, we mean that it cannot call evil anything but evil, though the man who does it be in general a doer of good. The purpose of moral science being to eliminate evil, it is folly to disguise any of its phenomena. But when the elimination is provided for, so to speak, by diagnosis, prescription and precaution, moral science has no more a mission of vengeance than has the physician in regard to his patient. But your apriorist, who, as we tend illogically to say, has so much to gain from being thus treated, is oftener than not zealous to set up a principle which allows of no final tolerance. Take Arnold's own words:—

> "Medical science has never gauged—never, perhaps, enough set itself

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to gauge—the intimate connection between moral fault and disease. To what extent, or in how many cases, what is called *illness* is due to moral springs having been used amiss, whether by being over-used or by not being used sufficiently, we *hardly at all know*, and we too little inquire. *Certainly* it is due to this very much more than we commonly think."[1]

Observe here the characteristic looseness of the thought: "we hardly at all know," but yet "certainly" we know the thing happens far oftener "than we commonly think." But see next the shallowness of the reasoning. Illness, we are told, often comes of moral springs being misused or neglected. Then, is that the end? How comes it that A to begin with tends to misuse or neglect his moral springs oftener than B? Is not that very tendency an "ill-ness," a constitutional flaw? Obviously it is, but it is strangely hard for the transcendentalist of any stage to forego the luxury of holding that men's unconditioned wills, souls *in vacuo*, are wont to set up evil in themselves by their own uncaused perversity, the soul being its own mover, lever, fulcrum, and object, in one. Arnold goes on to say, with apparent practicality, that on the view he sets forth, "moral therapeutics rise in possibility and importance." In possibility, how? His prescription is that "the bringer of light and happiness, the calmer and pacifier, the invigorator and stimulator, is one of the chiefest of doctors"; and the typical doctor, once more, is Jesus—Mr. Arnold's fairy Jesus, who did not say anything he is said to have said, if he should not have said it. But how much better are we here? Jesus is thus only a moral spring, and that unconditioned thing, the soul, is capable of causelessly misusing and neglecting its moral springs; and what then is finally left for it but damnation? There is where transcendentalism always has its root—in the very darkest animal instinct, which takes absolute and unconditioned free-will for granted, and, therefore, cannot finally forgive even the acknowledged madman without winking hard, while over the apparently sane it cannot wink. At best it may fall back on theories like Mr. Browning's,[2] about

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[1] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 147.

[2] *The Ring and the Book*, x., end.

> "That sad obscure sequestered state
> Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
> He else made first in vain"—

Mr. Browning's God being thus unexpectedly found to be Mr. Mill's, a God who does not get his own way, being the victim of circumstances and intractable materials. But that is only one way out of the dilemma, and one which, as it leads to a worse, few people can comfortably take; and we oftener see the spectacle presented by Mr. Gladstone, who, naturally a very forgiving man in practical affairs (as indeed he had need be, if he would be forgiven), is yet found, under the sting of theology, accusing unbelievers of immorality in not sufficiently cultivating their faculty of belief—forgetting that every Irish peasant has greatly the start of himself in that line of culture.

IX.

Well, the upshot of all this is, that men's minds are the outcome of their bodies, which are more or less extensive modifications of the bodies of their parents or ancestors; and when we have decided that Arnold, a man of first instincts, little given to having second instincts, had some very bad instincts in his capacity of prophet, our hostile function is at an end. We may tranquilly allow ourselves the satisfaction of sketching an explanation in terms of heredity and physiology. Arnold, his father, and his grandfather, all died of sudden heart disease; and men tend to have more of their fathers in them than the centre muscle. We have already seen some of his hereditities, and we may plausibly posit another. That unreasoning taste for war, we can see, is inherited like the pietism, and in a less modified form, having been but half-latent in the father. In Dr. Arnold's inaugural *Lecture on History*, there is a passage about the attractiveness of descriptions of battles, which ends:—"He who can read these without interest, differs, I am inclined to think, from the mass of mankind rather for the worse than for the better: he rather wants some noble qualities which other men have, than possesses some which other men want."[1] Now, it is true that descriptions of battles are extremely interesting to many of us; but it is a flagrant example of the method of prejudice to claim that because we are thus interested we are nobler than those who are not. Certainly Dr. Arnold in his letters expresses horror of European war; but this and other passages of his show that he had in him much of the militarist; and his son, always cultivating his tastes and his emotions rather than a morality of reason, developed rather than corrected that. What it is due to the father to say is, that he really had in him what the son had but little of, a sincere passion for justice, however ill-enlightened; and that if he was capable of proposing the flogging of rioters and the execution of their leaders, he was also capable of justifying the French Revolution of 1830 as a "most blessed one," and "the most glorious instance of a royal rebellion against society promptly and energetically repressed that the world has yet seen."[2] The trouble is that the father's passion for justice and the son's urbanity alike co-exist with such a fitful instinct for barbarity; and the combination in each case would be disheartening indeed if we did not remember that both alike were idealists or apriorists, for whom morality was something alien to science.

Naturally, it is not merely in matters of morality that Arnold illustrates by documentary inconsistency the resurgence of physiological bias after the period of youthful openness to new ideas. Once the question of moral evil has been disposed of, it is perhaps more an entertaining than a melancholy proceeding to trace through his books the train of self-contradiction which marks his line of development. At the outset, as we have seen, he is the enlightened young Englishman, touched by foreign culture and foreign ideas, and keenly alive to the miscalculations of patriotism. The great defect of Englishmen, he sees, is the lack of the critical spirit, and of the sane practice of criticism. An Englishman only asks if a book or a play pleases him; a Frenchman asks if he was right in being pleased by it. Consequently, an Englishman thinks it no objection whatever to anything that it is an anomaly. "1789 asked of a thing, Is it rational? 1642 asked of a thing, Is it legal? or, when it went furthest, Is it according to conscience? That is the English fashion."[1] In fine, he thinks it peculiarly uncommon for Englishmen to be on their guard against delusion and self-deception; and he singles out as a rare and shining exception the case of Burke's "return upon himself" as to the French Revolution in his late-written *Thoughts on French Affairs*. Burke there showed, vaguely enough it must be said, an uneasy suspicion that he might after all have been wrong; observing theistically that it is possible for a man blindly and vainly to resist the decrees of Providence, thinking them "the mere design of men." On this Arnold enthusiastically observes: "I know nothing more striking, and I must add that I know nothing more un-English."[2] And he warns his countrymen by sarcasm and precept to get rid of their too good conceit of themselves.

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[1] *Lectures on Modern History*, 4th ed., pp. 8-9.

[2] *Life*, Ch. V., *Letter* 21.

Now, turn to a late volume, the *Last Essays on Church and Religion*, and read there the now too well-known extract from Bishop Butler and the comment thereon. Arnold is here dwelling on the English Church, no longer conscious of a prevailing want of rationality in Englishmen, though he can still see some ecclesiastical and other faults:—

> "I know of no other Establishment so reasonable. Churches are characterised, I have said, by their great men. Show me any other great Church of which a chief actor and luminary has a sentence like this sentence, *splendide verax*, of Butler's:—'Things are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why then should we wish to be deceived?' To take in and digest such a sentence as that is an education in moral and intellectual activity. And, after all, intensely Butlerian as the sentence is, yet Butler came to it because he is *English;* because at the bottom of his nature lay such a fund of integrity."[3]

Well, did ever Sir Charles Adderly, or the *Daily Telegraph*, or

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[1] *Essays in Criticism*, p. 12.
[2] *Ib.* p. 18.
[3] *Last Essays*, p. 178 ("The Church of England").

Mr. Roebuck, say anything half so fatuously patriotic as that? Did anyone else ever ask Englishmen to believe that Pascal, and Bossuet, and Neander, and Döllinger were incapable of rising to the splendid moral and intellectual height of not wishing to be deceived, and of saying so? I am not going to hunt in the literature of other Establishments for "a sentence like that sentence." I will merely say, in the words of the critic of the "Jumping Frog," that "I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog"—of the ecclesiastical order. For really, when one remembers that Arnold uttered that magnificent fustian before an audience of English clergymen, one feels one is near the plane of farce.

And that is only one item. Not only has the un-English attitude of Burke become the peculiarly English attitude of Butler; but the foreign gift of criticism and the English lack of it turn out to matter nothing. The English Establishment, without criticism, is eminently reasonable. Foreign criticism is against it; foreign criticism pulls the Bible to pieces and is disposed to do without it; well, then, foreign criticism is finally all wrong; and in England the "unlearned belletristic trifler," as Arnold once described himself,[1] can set them all right. Strauss is unspiritual; Baur is all astray and is incurably German; the accomplished Gubernatis, though not German, is sunk in error. As for the French, are not they now sunk in something worse—in Lubricity? The anti-Trinitarian humorist and the most reasonable of Establishments have alone, somehow, got the right end of the stick, and they hold it fraternally between them. *Honi soit qui mal y pense;* neither is going to beat the other with it.

And then the anomalies. "Perhaps," wrote the Arnold of the early essays, "in fifty years' time it will in the English House of Commons be an objection to an institution that it is an anomaly, and my friend, the Member of Parliament, will shudder in his grave. But let us in the meanwhile rather endeavour that in twenty years' time it may, in English literature, be an objection to a proposition that it is absurd. That would be a change so vast that the imagination almost fails to grasp it."[1] Now, even at that time, Arnold was himself upholding anomalies, and resenting the demonstration of absurdities. Colenso had exhibited the absurdity of the story of the life of the Israelites in the wilderness, and Arnold was as hostile to him as were the general run of the clergy. But he was yet to distinguish himself by his championship of the English Church, a flagrant anomaly in itself, and one defended by him on the most anomalous grounds, as an institution for the promotion of righteousness. Historically, we know that that Church, in the words of Mr. Morley, has been "the ally of tyranny, the organ of social oppression, the champion of intellectual bondage." To this Arnold hardily makes answer that "every church is to be judged by its great men."[2] The position is monstrous. You might as reasonably urge that the institution of monarchy is to be historically and politically judged by its great men; and you would as plausibly justify that by dwelling on Marcus Aurelius and Alfred and Joseph of Austria, as prove the general beneficence of the Church of England by a few passages from Barrow and Butler. But Arnold's support of the Church is anomalous in every detail. With his beliefs as to deity and immortality, he had no more honest business with the worship of the English Church than with those of the Chinese, but he was ready to go through all the mummeries of Christian ceremonial for the sake of having his æsthetic tastes propitiated. His whole religion was itself an anomaly. He made it a weakness in Judaism that its religion was too much a national and social, and too little an individual affair; and he makes it a merit in the English Church to be national and social; and a demerit in the Dissenter to be busied with the affairs of his church. And in politics he gave the very pattest illustration of the English tendency, which he had impeached, to regard it as no objection to a law that it was anomalous. The law against marriage with a deceased wife's sister rests wholly upon an obviously false construction of one Hebrew text; and many good citizens have urged its abolition on serious practical grounds. These citizens, no doubt, fall into anomaly in so far as they would still forbid marriage with a deceased brother's widow; but most of them simply ask for what they feel to be necessary, and what they think they might get. Arnold always opposed them, on the sole ground that the marriages they wanted to legalise were in bad taste. Well, taste is a delicate matter; and when Arnold allows himself to say of Liberal Dissenters that they themselves all wanted to marry their deceased wives' sisters, he makes other people in turn raise their eyebrows. "He has his eye on his deceased wife's sister," is Arnold's description of the Liberal who supports the agitation for abolition of the law; if you vote for it you are doing it for your own private ends. On which one is moved to say what Madame de Broglie said of Madame de Balbi, that "it is only the perfection of good taste that could teach such bad manners."

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[1] In the *Essay on the Study of Celtic Literature.*

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[1] *Essays in Criticism*, p. 42. [2] *Last Essays*, p. 167.

X.

Taste may lead a man to strange conclusions. It may be doubted whether Arnold's most ardent admirers were quite at ease in their minds about his latter-day gospel of "Numbers," proclaimed by him in the strange discourse under that title which he framed for his American audiences; but which it would seem they were unable to hear. In that lecture, after all his vindications of Equality, his ideas of Christianising the masses, his impeachments of the idolatrous work of the middle and upper classes, he falls back on the doctrine that it is impossible to have a whole civilised nation; that nations live by virtue of their "remnant" of superior people; and that the people of the United States are fortunate in that they are at once so Germanic and so numerous, because they may thus have the biggest remnant of good quality on record. In Athens, with its three hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, even a remnant of one in ten—thirty-five thousand—was insufficient to save the State; and similarly the population of Israel could not yield remnant enough; but in a country like the United States, with its population of fifty millions of the Germanic stock, prepared by the Puritan discipline, even a remnant of one in a hundred would represent five hundred thousand and this would probably be sufficient for saving purposes. A more dismally fantastic doctrine will not readily be found in secular literature. The whole thesis is from the start so entirely in the air that we never come within sight of its practical application. Arnold makes the assumption, first, that as States have fallen in the past, they must fall in the future; and next, that when States fall it is always because of the "unsoundness" of the majority. Athens, Jewry, Assyria, Rome, are all cited in turn. Now, every one of these States fell before the violence of military conquest, and there is nothing to show that but for such conquest they would not have subsisted continuously till this day. Arnold's argument is meaningless unless it be implied that as these ancient States fell before violence, so any modern State may fall; but he does not offer a hint of the possible form of such a contingency, and there is no reason to suppose he really contemplated it. What was lacking in Athens, and Jewry, and Assyria, and Rome, successively, was a sufficiently firm military and political organisation. It is the merest dogmatising, however, to assume that such organisations would be identical with a sound "remnant" in the sense in which Arnold defined it. The American "remnant," we learn, will consist of all the people who cultivate the Pauline "whatsoevers;" and they are to preserve the unsound majority from ruin. But what is ruin? France, we learn, runs risk of ruin because of the French worship of Lubricity, or the goddess Aselgeia—a stigma which the latter-day Arnold is always fastening on the whole French nation, on the strength of the outspokenness of French fiction, without asking whether Berlin and Vienna do not exhibit precisely the tendencies of Paris, or whether Zola's Paris is not really sounder than the Paris of Molière, or whether the London of Shakspere did not display just the tastes of the Paris of Zola. One wearies of this inveterate superficiality, and asks again, more pressingly, How then is France likely to be ruined? By military conquest? Then if France beats Germany in another war, as she did before, by means of a great general, will Germany have been ruined by want of a sufficient sound remnant? And yet again, if modern conquest ceases to mean political and material destruction, like the destruction of Assyria and Rome; if there are no more barbarous races capable of overthrowing a civilisation; *what* does ruin mean? Is there more lubricity in Paris to-day than there was in the Middle Ages; and is there less in Berlin than there was a hundred years ago? And if numbers give safety, how comes it that lubricity seems more dangerous in a France of thirty-five millions than in a France of ten millions?

It is idle to question. There is no sociological or philosophical conception behind the doctrine of Numbers: there is only a mood: a recoil of a jaded taste from the crudities of large populations and democratic culture. A habit of phrasing and formulating yields us the semblances of generalisation, and so we come by the fantastic proposition that thirty-five thousand sound people cannot save a State of three hundred and fifty thousand from its unsound majority, but that five hundred thousand may somehow save a State of fifty millions from the ruinous tendencies of the other forty-nine and a half millions. And this is our demonstration of the truth of the old vaunt of Dr. Arnold, made without the fear of the coming Matthew Arnold before his eyes, that the Germanic peoples are the best: given a Germanic stock and a Puritan discipline, you may haply have half a million sound in the "whatsoevers," to forty-nine and a half millions of unsound. It is hard to say whether we ought to laugh or weep; but at least there is no need to ask whether this glad tidings of great joy will give rest to the souls of the Germanic or any other stock, with or without the Puritan discipline. It is not found that even the most select American citizens exult at the prospect of saving their souls alive in Mr. Arnold's Remnant Warehouse. Whereunto shall we liken it? Irresistibly does the mind go back to a certain passage in a certain essay on Spinoza:—

> "Fra Angelico, the sweetest and most inspired of devout souls, has given us, in his great picture of the Last Judgment, his conception of beatitude. The elect are going round in a ring on long grass under laden fruit trees; two of them, more restless than the others, are flying up a battlemented

street—a street blank with all the ennui of the Middle Ages. Across a gulf is visible, for the delectation of the saints, a blazing cauldron in which Beelzebub is sousing the damned."[1]

If you call the saints the remnant, and the others the unsound majority—why, these things are an allegory.

XI.

But it is scarcely amusing, this Apocalypse to the new creed. Once more we are led to, I will not say a pessimistic, but an unsanguine view of the possibilities of right judgment in social science being arrived at by mere good-will, even joined with good-temper, in the absence of scientific patience and precision. Once more we have come to the sombre conclusion that the prophet who professes to speak with inspiration of righteousness and the way of life is apt to be an unsafe or helpless guide. Certainly Arnold is an improvement on the customary type. A prophet, as you have him in ancient history, and more recently in Carlyle, may be defined as a person whose language is strong and whose theory is wrong; for such in the main, if you will look into the matter, were most of the prophets of Jewry, though they were canonised by a posterity which had lost the power of estimating the value of their prescriptions. Arnold, certainly, opens a new era of prophecy by his urbanity and amenity; but still he has the badge of his tribe: he is very apt to be wrong. Like Carlyle, Arnold ends in being at points, though not at so many points, behind the best thought of his time, after having set out with ideas and aspirations notably better than those in the ascendant. It is a disheartening conclusion, and you who listen to me, feeling as much, may be disposed to ask whether it is worth while thus to pull prophets to pieces, only to preserve their fallacies, as it were, in spirits. It is indeed more cheerful to dwell on their personal virtues, and to think of their aims rather than of their errors. But what is the use of our going about our own aims unless we clearly realise how so many other aims miscarried?

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[1] *Essays in Criticism*, p. 267.

Why allege peace when there is no peace? The soldier must study the campaigns of his predecessors if he would know the art of war; the reformer must know the charts of the sea of life if he would avoid the ancient shoals and reefs, and guard against perturbation of his compass. It is sad to read of past shipwreck and failure, but it is sadder to fail once more for lack of thought. It has been mostly all failure hitherto, and our utmost vigilance will verily not secure us from disaster. Sternly vigilant, then, let us be.

And in that spirit, when all is said, we find that we are in reality at peace with those from whose errors we have learned caution, and that the memory even of the errors has become, not troublous, but pathetic; since in so far as they have warned us they wrought better than they knew, and furthered that which often they resisted. And in Arnold's case, if ever, the adjustment is easy. Even in error his, after all, is a benign figure, bearing itself in the stress of life with a serene grace that is a monition even to an adversary, and a benediction to us all when, as so often chances, he is for all of us, whether as poet or teacher, a minister of beauty, a helper, a sustainer, and a friend. Of Carlyle we could at least say that he roused and provoked the slumbering consciences of men. Of Arnold we can say not only that he did this with far more of amenity and temperance, and much less of repellent violence than Carlyle, but that in a hundred things his first call was so far right and wise that at once there was gain and amendment when it was heard. Against an occasional reinforcement of barbarism we have to set many a service to liberalism, to culture, to the very spirit of civilisation. If he wrought unwittingly against reason in seeking to undermine the extremer forms of unreason, let us not forget that he did that with a persuasiveness which in all probability wrought much more widely and effectively, up to a certain point, than the most consistently scientific advocacy could have done. And this service, withal, he rendered with such moderation and such search for rational tests, so far as his prepossessions would let him carry and apply them, that he taught men to value reason more than he did, and to carry further the principles he had sought to apply. Perhaps no writer of his time has led a larger number of conventionally trained people of moderate thinking powers to give up their more irrational traditional opinions. And not only do his urbanity and his culture, the while, secure him distinction and dignity as a publicist, with all his scientific inadequacy, but there stands ever behind the figure of the publicist the more shadowy yet more fascinating figure of the poet, whose song so often turns to a sigh the confident doctrine and cheerful mockeries of the propagandist. And who, in the act of passing judgment on the propagandist, can forget the melancholy undertone of his song, which sadly avows his inner diffidences as to truth:—

> "Ah! let us make no claim,
> On life's incognisable sea,
> To too exact a steering of our way;
> Let us not fret and fear to miss our aim,
> If some fair coast has lured us to make stay,
> Or some friend hailed us to keep company."[1]

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[1] *Human Life.*

JOHN RUSKIN.

I.

It is nearly thirty-three years since George Eliot wrote privately of Ruskin :—" His little book on the 'Political Economy of Art' contains some magnificent passages, mixed up with stupendous specimens of arrogant absurdity on some economical points ; but I venerate him as one of the great teachers of the day."[1] That judgment curiously sums up the average run of opinion about Ruskin now, among the readers who are sympathetic enough to feel his power, and independent enough to admire without total self-surrender. Like Carlyle and Arnold, he himself has put it on record that he has failed in his effort to influence his generation —an instructive and memorable avowal, coming from such different men. Carlyle made it despairingly,[2] Arnold resignedly and half-humorously,[3] Ruskin bitterly and passionately.[4] If they could say so, it must be true, for their minds are the measure of their failure, in terms of their aspiration ; but the avowal sets us asking : What are the objective facts ; how far have these men really failed to influence their generation in the direction in which they strove? Mill and Emerson made no such confession or complaint : was it that they had been less aspiring, or were more easily satisfied? In effect, their ideals were as high, and they were far enough from a smug contentment with things as they are. Was it not that they, in their very different ways, were less egoistic than the others, temperamentally more ready to believe that the world might work its salvation by other light than theirs? In the contrast they make with Carlyle, that explanation, I think, is not unacceptable; and if it seems less suitable in relation to Arnold, it is probably because, despite the ostensible fanaticism of his conviction that the legality of marriage with a deceased wife's sister is incompatible with a sound remnant, and his dogma that nothing is righteousness but the method and secret of Jesus Christ[1]—despite those primitive bigotries Arnold had some safeguard in his temperament against maniacal self-absorption, and thus is not typically at strife with his age. But whether the same explanation of baffled and embittered egoism will serve to explain the confessed defeatedness of Ruskin, we must not attempt to decide until we have investigated his case.

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[1] Mr. Cross's *Life*, ii., 7. It is instructive to compare the temper in which Ruskin later criticised George Eliot, in his essay on *Fiction, Fair and Foul*.

[2] Froude, *First Forty Years*, ii., 478.

[3] *Discourses in America*, p. 3.

[4] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 84, and others.

Of the men we have studied in this series, he, perhaps, is the one who is least elucidated by the light of heredity. In that connection he strikes us from the first as an abnormal product, not, of course, at all subversive of the doctrine of heredity, but very suggestive of the limitations of our knowledge, and of the subtlety of the process by which one human organism is proximately compounded out of two. The son of a hard-working and undemonstrative wine-merchant, notably intellectual only on the side of his artistic tastes, and of an evangelical Scotchwoman of tenacious character, but contracted mind and temperament, developes into one of the most eloquent prose writers of any age or literature, whose feeling for art is not a taste but a kind of passion; whose character is wayward and, save in literary and artistic pertinacity, weak; and who is readily admitted by all men to be a genius, in virtue of that evident capacity of high pressure brain action, which is the condition precedent of all eminent human accomplishment, whether in a self-controlled or in an ill-balanced organism. What is clear is that his faculty mainly reposes on an extraordinary power of observation, which we broadly assume to be the basis of artist-craft; and yet he is essentially not an artist in form or colour, though he trained himself to be a faithful and finished draughtsman. He has spent half a lifetime of strenuous if fitful labour on the study and analysis of artistic phenomena, of which he has written with a fire and an earnestness that were quite new in critical literature; and yet the men of real genius for art often deride his judgments, as being those of one who sees beauty with ethical eyes. Again, he has an almost unparalleled command of language, and in that has carried both art and energy to unsurpassed lengths; and yet in verse, which is the flower of verbal art, he has confessedly failed, lacking evidently a certain essential part of the poet's outfit. And in the end, after an assiduous preparation for the philosophy of æsthetics, he has made himself one of the most stringent and stirring of modern critics of life, attaining in that function to an intensity if not a breadth of impressiveness and of influence reached by none of his contemporaries. Yet here, too, his mastering eloquence and startling insight are flawed by a passion for the irrational and the irrelevant which leaves the dispassionate judge in doubt whether his unreason does not balance, as it certainly discredits, his wisdom.

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[1] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 386. *God and the Bible*, p. 9.

II.

It is part of the paradox of Ruskin's personality that his nominal rank in English literature is still determined for society by his first ambitious work, which he long refused to reprint, because of his maturer dissatisfaction in it. And this is not wholly unreasonable, for, ill-considered as is much of the thinking, and unchastened as is much of the style of "Modern Painters," it is certainly, for eloquence and energy, one of the most remarkable books ever produced by a youth in his twenties. Born in 1819, he published the first volume at twenty-four. And, further, that work is in many respects the key to his development, since it exhibits him as proceeding habitually from æsthetic observation to moral doctrine, thus reaching his artistic and ethical judgments alike directly from his impressions, and using his reasoning powers always primarily to support, and rarely later to check, his intuitions. And yet so vivid is this very faculty of observation and impressibility, that to him is due the credit of anticipating criticism on those vices of excess which, for a sensitive taste to-day, disfigure his early writing, apart from the question of the justice of his views. He has been the first to say how overcharged often was his own youthful style. "I am more and more grieved," he wrote in 1874, on one of the extracts then published with his consent, "as I re-read this and other portions of the most affected and weak of all my books (written in a moulting time of my life)—the second volume of 'Modern Painters'—at its morbid violence of passion and narrowness of thought. Yet, at heart, the book was, like my others, honest, and in substance it is mostly good, but all boiled to rags."[1]

But this is not the only light cast by his later on his earlier self. In "Modern Painters" he roundly asserted that none of the histories or heroes of the Bible have ever been well painted; and in 1874 he writes on this: "I knew nothing, when I wrote this passage, of Luini, Filippo Lippi, or Sandro Botticelli, and had not capacity to enter into the deeper feelings even of the men whom I was chiefly studying—Tintoret and Fra Angelico. But the British public is at present as little acquainted with the greater Florentines as I was then, and the passage, for *them*, remained true."[2] Observe here, in addition to the candour of the self-criticism as to Tintoret and Fra Angelico, the force of the admission as to the presumption with which the young art-critic made sweeping generalisations on the strength of his knowledge of a few painters; and take, again, the late comment on the passage in which the youth had magisterially set Scott above Wordsworth and Tennyson as a poet, and above Goethe and Balzac "as the great representative of the mind of the age in literature." "I knew nothing of Goethe," he confesses again, "when I put him with Balzac;" [3] but in this case, apparently unabashed, he goes on to justify his ignorant verdict on the strength of his later knowledge—badly enough, it must be said. These confessions will probably hold good of more of Ruskin's works than he himself connects them with. Headlong dogmatism on matters on which his thought had never gone further or deeper than his first vivid prejudice, is to the last as much a characteristic of his works as the sudden and penetrating analysis of social and other phenomena, of which his first burning glance has pierced the heart.

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[1] *Frondes Agrestes*, p. 148, *note*. [2] *Ib.*, p. 9, *note*. [3] *Ib.*, p. 17, *note*.

III.

I have said that his character is a perplexing one on the side of heredity; and yet it might be plausibly said that it is only that in him some peculiarity of nervous and circulatory structure, some speciality of heart and brain action, carries to a greatly higher power, on a basis of wider culture, at once the spontaneous artistic taste of the father, who taught his son to admire Turner, and the intense and irrational pietism of the mother, who instilled into her child her creed and religious habit.[1] If we carefully consider his work from first to last, we shall see that he is above all things a perceiver, a seer, in the strict sense; one who, in art, detects intentions and significances where other eyes miss them; who too often, indeed, sees intentions and significances in art and nature, words and books, which are unreal and wholly created by his own fancy; but who does really also detect vital relations among real phenomena which the dull eye of the average man wholly misses, just as he searches out every hint of plan and purpose in a mediæval picture, or in the manifold imagery of a Gothic cathedral. Some early words of his own, perhaps unconsciously, set forth the special nature of his gift :—

> "The more I think of it, I find this conclusion more impressed upon me, that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to *see* something, and tell what it *saw* in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion—all in one."[2]

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[1] See *Fors Clavigera*, Letters 10, p. 5; 42, p. 129; 53, p. 119, and *Præterita.*

[2] *Modern Painters*, iii., pt. iv., ch. xvi., sec. 28.

For him it has always been so; and the frequent discovery that he sees things altogether differently at different times, seems never to have impaired his habitual, his constitutional confidence in the necessary rightness of his impressions. In "Modern Painters" and "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," he wrote of things Protestant and Catholic entirely in the spirit of his mother's Evangelicalism, bringing to the inflated and rhetorical English fanaticism of that day, so often exemplified by Dr. Arnold, his own wealth of language and volume of sound, but no thinking worth speaking of. And as his Protestantism was essentially English, nay parochial, and was capable of being confuted even through his æsthetic impressions, he duly dropped it when a sufficiently vivid and deep impression reached him. He has given it to us in the picture of the little "Waldensian Chapel, where a little squeaking idiot was preaching to an audience of seventeen old women and three louts, that they were the only children of God in Turin."[1] From that moment the nullity of sectarian pretensions was a part of his customary thought. Now observe how he came by the idea. Any reflecting man who simply considered the general facts of religion in Christendom, without the stimulus of a squeaking Waldensian in a Little Bethel in Turin, might readily realise the folly of the mutual damnation of Catholic and Protestant. But Ruskin lived to be over thirty,[2] and the author of several elaborate and ambitious volumes, before that particular experience in Turin brought the truth home to him through the medium of eye and ear. Here, perhaps, we have some clue to his failure as an artist. His imagination, apparently so rich when it is at work, would seem to function only on the immediate stimulus of actual sensory impressions. Give him these, and so far as the association of visual images can carry him, his mind will evolve a train of thought at white heat, flashing at once into burning words. Thus the sight of a stupid little enclosure of untended and useless ground within iron railings in front of a new public-house, in a suburb he used to visit, will lead him into a whole panorama of inward realisation of the purposeless and mindless working of our industrial and capitalistic system as a whole, and its outcome in ugliness, apathy, and degradation.[1] Of such stimuli the world is full, and Ruskin is endlessly alive to them; but if he turns to deal with some problem where they cannot help him, where the path to truth lies through mazes that can be threaded only by the undropped clue of patiently continuous thought, the product of the method of consistency, he is a grotesque guide indeed. Thus it comes that, where sensory impressions cannot sting him into clear vision, his religion remains as arbitrary and irrational as it was when instilled into him by his mother, his Scripturalism as mediæval, his philosophy as childish. He puts it all categorically in one of his early deliverances, in reply to the charge of lowering sacred things by dragging them into secular questions, such as those of art now are for a Puritan public:—

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[1] *Fors Clavigera*, vol. vii., 1887, Letter 76, April, p. 104.

[2] See the rhetorical Protestant note appended to the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849.

> "We treat God with irreverence by banishing Him from our thoughts, not by referring to His will on slight occasions. His is not the finite authority or intelligence which cannot be troubled with small things. There is nothing so small but that we may honour God by asking His guidance of it, or insult Him by taking it into our own hands; and what is true of the Deity is equally true of His Revelation. We use it most reverently when most habitually: our insolence is in ever acting without reference to it, our true honouring of it is in its universal application."[2]

In that spirit, of simple theistic anthropomorphism, yielding of course very different results in his different moods, he has always written, contradicting himself with the inspired industry of the prophet of all ages. In later years, when he would express his wrath at the pollution and choking up of once beautiful springs, he declares that God "meant" these springs to flow properly, being no more able than the theist of everyday life to believe that his God really governs the universe. It is the old story of childish anthropomorphism and childish inconsequence which meets us wherever we look into theism. To himself, Ruskin probably seems a revealer of divine law and purpose in all things; and in his youth he brought a pretentious criticism to bear on Coleridge's early Ode to France, by way of expressing his superiority to the vulgar love of liberty. With lofty irrelevance, he reminds the poet, who had been singing the eternal human revolt against human despotism, that the whole universe exhibits the reign of law.[1] Natural law is, on the whole, little clearer to him in his prophetic old age than in his evangelical youth, when he saw divine design in all inanimate things; and oftener than not he is asserting that mankind are transgressing universal law and resisting Omnipotence. Just as his mother would see in a public calamity or in national error the punishing or blinding hand of a vengeful Deity, so to the last he falls into the mediæval attitude whenever he is weary of exhortation or hopeless of obedience.

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[1] See *The Crown of Wild Olive*, ed. 1882, pp. 4-10.

[2] *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 2nd ed., p. 5.

> "If there be any truth in the vital doctrines of Christianity whatever—and assuredly there is more than most of us recognise, or than any of us believe—the offences committed in this century by all the nations of Christendom against the law of Christ have been so great, and insolent, that they cannot but be punished by the withdrawal of spiritual guidance from them, and the especial paralysis of efforts intelligently made for their good."[2]

That is to say, God is, in the interests of divine justice, deliberately preventing the British public from listening to Mr. Ruskin, just as He prevented Pharaoh from listening to Moses; and yet somehow Mr. Ruskin, like Moses, while knowing all about it, is very imperfectly resigned.

In other moods, by way of offering express defiance to what he calls idiotic Atheism, he will produce a demonstration, to which I will apply no adjective, of the nature of his own faith, the effect of which is to make out that there is no tangible practical difference between Atheism and Theism:—

> "All my first books," he writes in *Fors Clavigera*, "to the end of the *Stones of Venice*, were written in the simple belief I had been taught as

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[1] *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, pp. 183-4.

[2] *Fors Clavigera*, vol. vi.; Letter 61, Jan. 1876, pp. 6-7.

> a child: and especially the second volume of *Modern Painters* was an outcry of enthusiastic praise of religious painting, in which you will find me placing Fra Angelico (see the closing paragraph of the book) above all other painters. But during my work at Venice, I discovered the gigantic power of Tintoret, and found that there was a quite different spirit in that from the spirit of Angelico: and analysing Venetian work carefully, I found—and told fearlessly in spite of my love for the masters—that there was 'no religion whatever in any work of Titian's; and that Tintoret only occasionally forgot himself into religion.'"

A proposition which he repeats, with the addition "that only when Tintoret forgets himself does he truly find himself"—a characteristic sophism. But, then, Titian had been given in all his art teaching after the *Stones of Venice* as a "standard of perfection;" and he continues:—

> "Conceive the weight of this problem, then, on my inner mind—how the most perfect work I knew, in my special business, could be done 'wholly without religion!' I set myself to work out that problem thoroughly in 1858, and arrived at the conclusion—which is an entirely sound one, and which did, indeed, alter from that time forward the tone and method of my teaching—that human work must be done honourably and thoroughly because we now are men;—whether we ever expect to be angels, or ever were slugs, being practically no matter. . . . Further, I found, and have always since taught, and do teach, and shall teach, I doubt not, till I die, that in resolving to do our work well, is the only sound foundation of any religion whatever; and that by that resolution only, and what we have done, and not by our belief, Christ will judge us, as He has plainly told us He will (though nobody believes Him) in the Resurrection."[1]

So that the "vital doctrines of Christianity" turn out to be, under a little disguise, the vital doctrines of universal ethics, common to all men and invented by none.

And in one place, half realising this, he turns for a moment to the Atheists as his only hope:—

> "If you address any average, modern English company as believing in an Eternal life, and then endeavour to draw any conclusion from this assumed belief, as to their present business, they will forthwith tell you that 'what you say is very beautiful, but it is not practical.' If, on the contrary, you frankly address them as *un*believers in Eternal life, and try to

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[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Vol. vii., Letter 76, April, 1877, pp. 101-3.

> draw any consequences from that unbelief, they immediately hold you for an accursed person, and shake off the dust from their feet at you."[1]

And he proceeds to declare that the "so-called Infidel," whom he dubs in his fantastic verbalist way a "believer in death," may be a very decent sort of person.

> "A brave belief in life is, indeed, an enviable frame of mind, but, as far as I can discern, an unusual one. I know few Christians so convinced of the splendour of the rooms in their Father's house, as to be happier when their friends are called to these mansions, than they would have been if the Queen had sent for them to live at Court: nor has the Church's most ardent 'desire to depart, and be with Christ,' ever cured it of the singular habit of putting on mourning for every person summoned to such departure. On the contrary, a brave belief in death has been assuredly held by many not ignoble persons; and it is a sign of the last depravity of the Church itself, when it assumes that such a belief is inconsistent with either purity of character, or energy of hand."[2]

Which is really a very handsome testimonial from Mr. Ruskin, coming so entirely unsolicited; though I am not sure that what he calls the last depravity of the Church was not an early depravity of his own. However that may be, it is clearly true, as he further says, that—

> "The shortness of life is not, to any rational person, a conclusive reason for wasting the space of it which may be granted him; nor does the anticipation of death to-morrow suggest, to any one but a drunkard, the expediency of drunkenness to-day. To teach that there is no device in the grave may, indeed, make the deviceless person more contented in his dulness; but it will make the deviser only more earnest in devising: nor is human conduct likely, in every case, to be purer, under the conviction that all its evil may in a moment be pardoned, and all its wrong-doing in a moment redeemed."

To a man of genius who approaches us occasionally in that style and spirit, however benighted may be his own scheme of philosophy or theosophy, it is worth our while to listen, even if he proceeds to describe us as "men for whom feebleness of sight, or bitterness of soul, or the offence given by the conduct of those who claim higher hope" has rendered our "painful creed the only possible one." We reflect that in bitterness of soul Mr. Ruskin can, as a rule, give points to most of us; and that he is about as much offended as most of us with the conduct of his fellow-Christians;[1] and we have our own opinions about his range of vision. And, finally, he is good enough to say that to us "there is an appeal to be made, more secure than any which can be addressed to happier persons,"—the happier persons being the happy Christian recipients of Mr. Ruskin's most biting invective.

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[1] *Crown of Wild Olive*, p. 11. [2] *Ib.* p. 15.

IV.

I have said that Ruskin, as a social teacher, wields a more intense and impressive influence than any of his contemporaries. He does this by virtue of his two great qualifications of literary style and luminousness of exposition, within the range of his accurate vision. His prose, which from the first had a boundless wealth of power and colour, has in his latter years grown more and more direct and electric without losing any of its eloquence, seeming to be burned ever purer in the fire of his passion. As a writer he is to Carlyle as Apollo to a Titan, a born consummate master[2] where the other is a gigantic wrestler; and he can reach effects of which Carlyle never dreamed. Arnold, quoting with admiration one of his most marvellous descriptive passages, remarks of it with gentle deprecation that the style seeks to do more than prose can really accomplish. Certainly Arnold's own style never tried that: the breath of that spirit never moves on the smooth surface of his clear waters. But to see Ruskin even exhausting language is a literary experience worth having from any standpoint.

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[1] "Even out of the rotten mob of money-begotten traitors calling itself a 'people' in England, I do believe I shall be able to extricate, by slow degrees, some faithful and true persons, hating covetousness, and fearing God." (*Fors Clavigera*, Letter 72, Feb., 1876, p. 46.)

[2] It is not meant by this, of course, that he was not a hard student. He confesses to imitation of Hooker (*Frondes Agrestes*, p. 147), and has told of how he would once spend hours polishing paragraphs.

And just as he transcends Carlyle in word-magic, so does he transcend him in the blazing force of his criticism of modern English life, where he sees true and aims straight. His preparation, in the close study of relations in the department of æsthetics, seems to give him an abnormal power of seeing and representing in groups and masses the connections of our industrial life, which Carlyle only saw under a few ethical headings, though he too had the pictorial eye. Carlyle, at bottom a Puritan, is always running into ethical metaphor, where Ruskin, tingling under a primary æsthetic stimulus, gives us in a flash the actual facts. Thus he is in these matters by far the more "inevitable" critic, to use Wordsworth's phrase; and indeed I must confess to a certain want of proportion in the scheme of these lectures, in that Ruskin is treated in only one, while Carlyle and Arnold each occupy two. It is only the fitfulness of his intense light that can in any degree justify the briefer treatment of him; for in respect of certain of his views and visions of our social system he brings us, with all his passion and divagation, closer to the factual bases of dynamic sociology than any of the other teachers we have studied. Of all previous writers he especially recalls Rousseau, resembling him alike in temperament,[1] in instability, in passionate insight, in literary genius, and in his social ideals and aspirations. And it may well be that he shall have a not dissimilar influence over the generation which follows him.

To read Ruskin is to acquire new perceptions of what our life actually means, in terms of human sensation and the resulting possibilities of future sensation. He has set up against himself an incalculable amount of solid disregard by his outcries against machinery; and in so far as he estimates the results of machinery by fantastic absolute standards and false comparative standards, as by contrasting an unreal past with our present, this disregard is justified. But, on the other hand, he has written some of the finest passages in all literature in praise of machinery—of the locomotive, for instance;[1] and for the rest, his protests against the conditions under which we use machinery, and the ends to which we turn it, are often unanswerable. And even where he overstrains a case and takes a special illustration which rather enforces his protest than really typifies the facts in the mass, his way of seeing and putting it is often strangely suggestive, and may lend itself to a sounder general statement than he has offered. Take for instance his justification of his phrase "infernal means of locomotion" as a general description of railway travelling. He at once reproduces, in vivid detail, a staggering picture of what he has actually seen railway travelling to mean with his own eyes.

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[1] Very like a hallucination of Rousseau's is the story of Ruskin's wild perversion of a remark of Carlyle's as to how he was treated in his walks in London. See it in Mr. Shepherd's *Life of Carlyle*, ii., 248-252.

"For instance: the town of Ulverstone is twelve miles from me, by four miles of mountain road beside Coniston Lake, three through a pastoral valley, five by the seaside. A healthier or lovelier walk would be difficult to find. In old times, if a Coniston peasant had any business at Ulverstone, he walked to Ulverstone, spent nothing but shoe-leather on the road, drank at the streams, and if he spent a couple of batz when he got to Ulverstone, "it was the end of the world." But now, he would never think of doing such a thing! He first walks three miles in a contrary direction to a railroad station, and then travels by railroad twenty-four miles to Ulverstone, paying two shillings fare. During the twenty-four miles' transit he is idle, dusty, stupid, and either more hot or cold than is pleasant to him. In either case he drinks beer at two or three of the stations, passes his time between them with anybody he can find, in talking, without having anything to talk of; and such talk always becomes vicious. He arrives at Ulverstone, jaded, half drunk, and otherwise demoralised, and three shillings, at least, poorer than in the morning. Of that sum, a shilling has gone for beer, threepence to a railway shareholder, threepence in coals, and eighteenpence has been spent in employing strong men in the vile mechanical work of making and driving a machine, instead of his own legs, to carry the drunken lout. The results, absolute loss and demoralisation to the poor, on all sides, and iniquitous gain to the rich. Fancy, if you saw the railway officials actually employed in carrying the countryman bodily on their backs to Ulverstone, what you would think of the business! And because they waste ever so much iron and fuel besides to do it, you think it a profitable one!"[1]

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[1] See the passage quoted in Professor Geddes' essay, *John Ruskin*, in the *Round Table* series, p. 20. But Mr. Geddes is wrong when he goes on to say that the passage proves those to be wrong who say that Ruskin recommends the disuse of all machinery. He actually has done so—see below. It is one of his countless self-contradictions.

Now, that is clearly not a fair sample case of railway travelling; and the choice of contrast between a roadside walk and a train journey, instead of between the train journey and an old stage-coach ride or waggon journey, almost suggests an incapacity for justice of comparison. But still it is *a* case which most people would overlook. And now turn to a picture which gives a much more comprehensive view of a sociological case—the case of the relation of the English land system to its town industrial system, and the æsthetic upshot of the whole. As usual he sees things in the concrete, and begins with the position and practice of the typical landlord or squire, in person:—

> "The action of the squire for the last fifty years has been, broadly, to take the food from the ground of his estate, and carry it to London, where he feeds with it a vast number of builders, upholsterers (one of them charged me five pounds for a footstool the other day), carriage and harness makers, dressmakers, grooms, footmen, bad musicians, bad painters, gamblers, and harlots, and in supply of the wants of these main classes, a vast number of shopkeepers of minor useless articles. The muscles and the time of this enormous population being wholly unproductive—(for, of course, time spent in the mere process of sale is unproductive, and much more that of the footman and groom, while that of the vulgar upholsterer, jeweller, fiddler, and painter, etc., etc., is not only unproductive but mischievous)—the entire mass of this London population do nothing whatever either to feed or clothe themselves; and their vile life preventing them from all rational entertainment, they are compelled to seek some pastime in a vile literature, the demand for which again occupies another enormous class, who do nothing to feed or dress themselves; finally, the vain disputes of the vicious population give employment to the vast industry of the lawyers and their clerks, who similarly do nothing to feed or dress themselves. Now the peasant might still be able to supply this enormous town population with food (in the form of the squire's rent), but it cannot, without machinery, supply the flimsy dresses, toys, metal work, and other rubbish belonging to their accursed life. Hence over the whole country the sky is blackened and the air made pestilent to supply London and other such towns with their iron railings, vulgar upholstery, jewels, toys, liveries, lace, and other means of dissipation and dishonour of life. Gradually the

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[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 44, August, 1874, vol. iv., pp. 166-7.

> country people cannot even supply food to the voracity of the vicious centre; and it is necessary to import food from other countries, giving in exchange any kind of commodity we can attract their itching desires for, and produce by machinery. The tendency of the entire national energy is, therefore, to approximate more and more to the state of a squirrel in a cage, or a turnspit in a wheel, fed by foreign masters with nuts and dog's meat."[1]

And then follows a bird's-eye view of central London, swift, mordant, unforgettable, unanswerable. Here too, of course, there is exaggeration, just as there is exaggeration in Arnold's classification of his countrymen, which takes no ostensible account of the multitudes of more or less refined and humane persons in all classes. As all men are not in actual fact Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace, so all industrial and commercial lives are not ignoble and mindless, but are often lit up by art and culture, and unselfish good feeling. But take the allegations of Ruskin in the lump, and who can deny their force and point?

And take next another of his sociological generalisations which comes still closer to the truth, and see what you will make of that:

> "Observe what the real fact is, respecting loans to foreign military governments, and how strange it is. If your little boy came to you to ask for money to spend in squibs and crackers, you would think twice before you gave it him; and you would have some idea that it was wasted, when you saw it fly off in fireworks, even though he did no mischief with it. But the Russian children and Austrian children come to you borrowing money, not to spend in innocent squibs, but in cartridges and bayonets to attack you in India with, and to keep down all noble life in Italy with, and to murder Polish women and children with; and *that* you will give at once, because they pay you interest for it. Now, in order to pay you that interest they must tax every working peasant in their dominions; and on that work you live. You, therefore, at once rob the Austrian peasant, assassinate or banish the Polish peasant, and you live on the produce of the theft, and the bribe for the assassination! That is the broad fact—that is the practical meaning of your foreign loans, and of most large interest of money; and then you quarrel with Bishop Colenso, forsooth, as *he* denied the Bible, and you believed it! though every deliberate act of your lives is a new defiance of its primary orders."[2]

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[1] Letter 44, Aug., 1874, vol. iv., pp. 173-175.

[2] *Crown of Wild Olive*, pp. 41-2. Cf. *Fors Clavigera*, as indexed under "National Debt."

Alter here a few of the phrases, substitute something else for the Jingo nightmare of Russian designs on India, and you have a vivid, dramatic diagram of a large part of the significance of national debts, in terms of life and conduct. But that line of argument goes far; and in another place, on another stimulus—for Ruskin is simply an irregular series of lightning zig-zags, never combined into continuous light—you find him following it up to its most intimate conclusions :—

> "There is nothing really more monstrous in any recorded savagery or absurdity of mankind, than that governments should be able to get money for any folly they choose to commit, by selling to capitalists the right of taxing future generations to the end of time. All the cruellest wars inflicted, all the basest luxuries grasped by the idle classes, are thus paid for by the poor a hundred times over. And yet I am obliged to keep my money in the funds or the bank, because I know no other mode of keeping it safe ; and if I refused to take the interest, I should only throw it into the hands of the very people who would use it for these evil purposes, or, at all events, for less good than I can. Nevertheless it is daily becoming a more grave question with me what it may presently be right to do. It may be better to diminish private charities, and much more, my own luxury of life, than to comply in any sort with a national sin. But I am not agitated or anxious in the matter : content to know my principle, and to work steadily towards better fulfilment of it."[1]

Here we have Ruskin's answer to the challenge, often thrown at him, as to how he can decently denounce usury, after having lived most of his life on it. The answer is a sufficient one. All that can be urged against it is that had he early made up his mind to earn his living by his works, as he might have done long ago, and as he more than does now by reason of his revenue from his books, he might have used his father's laboriously amassed wealth to found institutions which would have wrought for his purposes. But then even institutions, in our commercial world, must mostly subsist upon interest ; and, on the other hand, those who know how rarely an independent thinker can do the best work he is capable of in the process of earning his bread and butter, will be slow to say that Ruskin chose ill, even in the light of his own ideals. Certainly he has had a good deal of "luxury of life;" but he has probably suffered for it, and for the rest he has not been much of an idler, as brain industry goes.

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[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 44, pp. 178-9, vol. iv., 1874.

V.

Nor does his sociological work end with tracing the moral connections and consequences of institutions; he has brought his faculty to bear on scientific economics with some remarkable results. At once he put his finger on the time-honoured fallacy of saving, and formulated the fact as it really is:—

> "Men nearly always speak and write as if riches" [that is, money wealth] "were absolute, and it were possible, by following certain scientific precepts, for everybody to be rich. Whereas riches are a power like that of electricity, acting only through inequalities or negations of itself. The force of the guinea you have in your pocket depends wholly on the default of a guinea in your neighbour's pocket. If he did not want it, it would be of no use to you."[1]

That is entirely true doctrine, striking at the root of the established economic optimism, of which the so-called political economy is, as Ruskin justly says, not a political or national, but merely a mercantile economy:—

> "Mercantile economy, the economy of 'merces' or of 'pay,' signifies the accumulation in the hands of individuals, of legal or moral claim upon, or power over, the labour of others; every such claim implying precisely as much poverty or debt on one side, as it implies riches or right on the other."[2]

And whereas the mercantile economist is always thinking of the mere machinery of production and exchange, producing blindfold to undersell, Ruskin rightly insists that the study and regulation of consumption is clearly the master problem for the true political economist.

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[1] *Unto this Last*, p. 40. [2] *Ib.* p. 42.

> "Economists usually speak as if there were no good in consumption absolute.[1] So far from this being so, consumption absolute is the end, crown, and perfection of production; and wise consumption is a far more difficult art than wise production. Twenty people can gain money for one who can use it; and the vital question, for individual and for nation, is, never 'how much do they make?' but 'to what purpose do they spend?'"[2]

I suspect that if another man had written that, Mr. Ruskin might have vehemently protested that the "end, crown, and perfection of production" is not the consumption but the life which it sustains; but in terms of economics the doctrine is thoroughly valid, and its incorporation in the science is inevitable. To which end various writers, some inspired by Ruskin and some not, have been steadily working for a number of years back. And if only Ruskin could always or in general have written with science and logic, could have given us a work of connected economic thought without the irrelevances and irrationalities which are not science but merely personal perversity and caprice, the recasting of economics might have gone on a great deal faster. But truth in Ruskin is never far from error, and his is not the temper which pursues truth with serene delight. Arrogance is always driving him to contemn even before he has comprehended; and when he has found out the economists in some errors, he makes up his mind that their every formula is false:—

> "The writings of our vulgar political economists, calling money only a 'medium of exchange,' blind the foolish public conveniently to all the practical actions of the machinery of the currency. Money is not a medium of exchange, but a token of right. I have, suppose, at this moment, ten, twenty, or thirty thousand pounds. That signifies that, as compared with a man who has only ten pounds, I can claim possession of, call for, and do what I like with a thousand, or two thousand, or three thousand times as much of the valuable things existing in the country."[3]

The term "vulgar" may fitly be applied to a contemptuous assault on a doctrine which the critic has not properly studied. It is perfectly true that money is a token of right; but it is also perfectly true that it is a medium of exchange, and it is as a medium of exchange that it is typically important, since the sum of actual money is very much less than the total of credits. The token of right may take a dozen other shapes than money. An entry in a banker's book is a token of right; so is an I O U, or a promissory note, or a commercial warrant; and a man with thirty thousand pounds never dreams of having it in money. But the great extensions of commerce began in the facility of exchange which money supplied, and to-day that is its main function. The criticism is reckless and misdirected. And worse than reckless is Ruskin's preliminary attack upon the technical method of economics, which he simply misrepresents, by way of making it seem as morally offensive to others as it is alien to his own habits of thought. He has, perhaps, misled more weak heads by his words on that point than he has helped strong ones by his better judgments.

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[1] When Mr. Mill speaks of productive consumption, he only means consumption which results in increase of capital, or material wealth. See I. iii. 4, and I. iii. 5. *Ruskin's Note.*

[2] *Ib.* p. 144.

[3] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 44, Aug., 1874, vol. iv., p. 173, *note.*

> "Among the delusions which at different periods have possessed themselves of the minds of large masses of the human race, perhaps the most curious—certainly the least creditable—is the modern *soi-disant* science of political economy, based on the idea that an advantageous code of social action may be determined irrespectively of the influence of social affection."[1]

Now, that is an explicit calumny to begin with: economists never professed to reach an advantageous "code of social action," but only to set forth the laws or tendencies of normal commerce. And from calumny the critic proceeds to absurdity:—

> "I neither impugn nor doubt the conclusions of the science, if its terms are accepted. I am simply uninterested in them, as I should be in those of a science of gymnastics which assumed that men had no skeletons . . . . Modern political economy stands on a precisely similar basis."[2]

After that I cannot wonder that economists turn from Ruskin in contempt or irritation. His analogy is pure nonsense, and might as reasonably be used against mechanics, in so far as that proceeds on the first law of motion. Ruskin is here only repeating an old and vulgar fallacy; and when a book on economics begins so, it is not strange if expert readers, who also have their prejudices, throw it aside and deride it. If they go on, they will find other displays of which it is hardly possible to speak in the language of normal controversy. Ruskin passes on Ricardo one criticism in particular which is worthy of an Old Bailey practitioner. He quotes Ricardo's proposition,[1] that if the implements of the primitive hunter and fisher were of equal value and durability, and were the produce of the same amount of labour, "the value of the deer, the produce of the day's labour, would be *exactly* equal to the value of the fish, the produce of the fisherman's day's labour. The comparative value of the fish and game would be *entirely* regulated by the quantity of labour realised in each." Ruskin puts the italics, and exclaims:—

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[1] *Unto this Last*, p. 1. [2] *Ib.* pp. 3-4.

> "Indeed! Therefore, if the fisherman catches one sprat, and the huntsman one deer, one sprat will be equal in value to one deer; but if the fisherman catches no sprat and the huntsman two deer, no sprat will be equal in value to two deer."[2]

The merest beginner can see that this is a nefarious quibble. Ricardo is clearly arguing of averages; and if *on an average* the fisherman's day's labour yielded only one fish, that fish would be worth the average of the hunter's bag, whatever that might be. The principle is a permanent part of economic science. No doubt, Ricardo should have quantified his statement more precisely; but he wrote for men who would want to understand him; not for those who would want to juggle with him. And the economist who knew Ricardo's value and integrity would be much disposed to write Ruskin down, on the strength of that discreditable passage, an unscrupulous sophist.[3]

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[1] *Principles of Political Economy*, ch. i., sect. 3. [2] *Unto this Last*, p. 115.

[3] At times, again, he resorts to the most amazing scurrility. Of Adam Smith he writes: "It is true that the half-bred and half-witted Scotchman had not gift enough in him to carve so much as his own calf's head on a whinstone with his own hand" (*Fors Clavigera*, Letter 72, Feb., 1876, p. 47). To Mill, he has been invariably insolent.

And this outcome is in a way typical of Ruskin's achievement in many directions. For want of patience and temper, and, alas! want of continuous sanity, he has set against him alike economists, artists, democrats, rationalists, scientists; and the luxury of all-round vituperation is dearly bought at that price by a man who wants to make proselytes. Proselytes Ruskin has indeed made, often proselytes of a good type, sensitive, refined, sincere, sympathetic, cultured, wanting apparently in nothing but the power to set up an energetic movement. He has thousands of readers, and he bitterly complains that he has written in vain.

VI.

Nobody, all the while, makes a more thrilling appeal to the individual conscience, a more direct demand for individual action. In the most unlikely places, in the heart of the darkened and bedevilled factory life which infuriates him, in Sheffield and in Glasgow, he sets up eddies of revolt against the prevailing course of things. One who has once intelligently listened to him may turn hopeless of betterment, but cannot well grow dull again to the nature of his surroundings. His impeachments flash on the perceptive sense as lightning on the eye.

> "Your present system of education is to get a rascal of an architect to order a rascal of a clerk-of-the-works to order a parcel of rascally bricklayers to build you a bestially stupid building in the middle of the town, poisoned with gas, and with an iron floor which will drop you all through it some frosty evening; wherein you will bring a puppet of a cockney lecturer in a dress-coat and a white tie to tell you smugly there's no God, and how many messes he can make of a lump of sugar. Much the better you are for all that, aren't you?"[1]

Is it the very vehemence, the bitterness, that repels or paralyses; or is it that the wild Irrationalism of the outcry against the non-æsthetic forces of civilisation hardens men's hearts against the æsthetic criticism? It may well be so; and yet, the æsthete can be winningly earnest, pathetically impressive in his address to the individual listener.

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[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 75, March 1, 1877, vol. vii., pp. 79-80.

> "If the present state of this so-called rich England is so essentially miserable and poverty-stricken that honest men must always live from hand-to-mouth, while speculators make fortunes by cheating them out of their labour; and if, therefore, no sum can be set aside for charity, the paralysed honest man can certainly do little for the present. But, with what can be spared for charity, if *anything*, do this; buy ever so small a bit of ground, in the midst of the worst back deserts of our manufacturing towns; six feet square, if no more can be had, nay, the size of a grave, if you will, but buy it *freehold*, and make a garden of it by hand-labour; a garden visible to all men, and cultivated *for* all men of that place. If absolutely nothing will grow in it, then have herbs carried there in pots. Force the bit of ground into order, cleanliness, *green* or *coloured* aspect. What difficulties you have in doing this are your best subjects of thought; the good you will do in doing this the best in your present power."[1]

This is surely an improvement on the Carlylean roar that you must do something, but God knows what. And yet, what hope does it hold out that the prescribed transformation will be made? The note wavers, swells, and sinks again :—

> "What are you to do, having got into this mechanical line of life? You must persevere in it and do the best you can for the present, but resolve to get out of it as soon as may be. The one essential point is to know thoroughly that it is wrong; how to get out of it you can decide afterwards at your leisure."

And yet we get precise prescription enough :—

> "Whatever machinery is needful for human purposes can be driven by wind or water; the Thames alone could drive mills enough to weave velvet and silk for all England. But even mechanical occupation not involving pollution of the atmosphere must be as limited as possible, for it invariably degrades . . . You must not, eventually, for no purpose or motive whatsoever, live amidst smoke and filth, or allow others to do so; you must see that your slaves are as comfortable as their employment permits, and that they are paid wages high enough to allow them to leave it often for redemption and rest."

But in the end we find at best a sombre and unconfident fortitude, the half-despairing calm of the prophet who feels he has cast his bread on the waters :—

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[1] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 44, Aug., 1874, vol. iv., p. 180.

> "Eventually, I say; how fast events may move, none of us know; in our compliance with them, let us at least be intelligently patient—if at all; not blindly patient."[1]

And at times the composure lapses to a despair to which the only offset is its own vehemence. For this organism must voice its every mood as if the moment's inspiration were the crowning one. The finely poised needle of feeling veers this way and that, shaken by the vessel's motion, drawn by surrounding things, perturbed by passing electricities; and the spirit which patiently calculates out all is something alien to the prophet. Therefore is it that the prophet, of all men, can never really predict.

VII.

Has all Ruskin's criticism of life, then, really failed, as he frequently says it has, to influence the action of his age? He says men read and praise his books, but do not obey them; women do him homage, but do not join his Society of St. George. That is true; and if nothing will satisfy him but such visible obedience and such adhesion to his personally conducted Society, he may well go to his grave broken-hearted. Society will never be changed by being filtered through private institutions: it must modify its own; and that can never be done save slowly, and will never be done wisely and consciously save on a wide knowledge and a comprehensive plan. But such plan and knowledge necessarily exclude the sway of egoism; and the teacher who cherishes the poor ambition to rule over a society of disciples who call him master, rather than the pure ambition of seeing men increasingly able to be their own masters, so as to make feudal masterhood as impossible as it is barbarous—such a teacher is doomed to end in bitterness, unless his ideal narrows with his powers. He has lost what vestige of rational significance lay under the theistic formula of resignation to the will of God. For him there can be no comfort save in the realisation of his own will; and the will of the egoist is, in the terms of the case, as narrow as his own life. Doubtless every reformer is so, primarily, because it is essential to his peace of mind to see things go in a certain direction. But let him beware how he makes his predilection narrower than the possibilities; or how he sets his heart on more than the necessary conditions of forward movement. Let him carefully think out these and strive for them, and let him cheerfully leave the rest to the unmeasured instinct and aspiration of mankind. So will he best have his part in them. To aspire to play Confucius for Europe, and to fix an eternal order in the light of certain ancient and dead orders, is to sink philanthropy in egoism; and he who would not see Europe ape Cathay, must rejoice that his fellows refuse to be hypnotised by their prophets.

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[1] *Fors Clavigera*, pp. 177-8.

Now, it lies on the face of all Ruskin's work, that in him an intense egoism is the condition of his eloquence and energy. At times, certainly, it seems to disappear, in homage to some one of his masters, Carlyle or another; but even then he identifies his prejudice with theirs, and never does he long abide in the attitude of impersonal concern for simple truth. In all his polemic, even at its best and justest, is visible his normal inability to conceive, or even suspect, how any life or opinion can be right or good which clashes with his tastes and convictions. He lays down binding principles for the regulation of all life in terms of his sentiments for the time being. Professing at times a transcendental reverence for women, he lays down the lines on which they are to live and think, and this in the very act of denouncing the masculine notion that men ought to think for women. Men must not, but Mr. Ruskin may. And the law laid down varies according as Mr. Ruskin happens last to have been stimulated. One day it is that women are to govern the house: "The woman's power is for rule, . . . and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision."[1] Another day, things are different. "You fancy, perhaps, as you have been told so often, that a wife's rule should only be over her husband's house, not over his mind. Ah, no! the true rule is just the reverse of that; a true wife, in her husband's house, is his servant; it is in his heart that she is queen."[1] Mind here appears to be identical with heart. But in the other book we had been told this: "Speaking broadly, a man ought to know any language or science he learns, thoroughly—while a woman ought to know the same language, or science, only in so far as may enable her to sympathise in her husband's pleasures, and in those of his best friends."[2] Then follows some sophistry about the difference between limited knowledge and superficial knowledge: the woman is to know "with exquisite accuracy so far as she reaches," which means, I suppose, that she is to know the Greek alphabet, or the conjugations, with exquisite accuracy, in order to sympathise with her husband's views on corrupt passages in Æschylus; and to know a botany primer with exquisite accuracy, in order to share in discussions on the relations of fossil flora. To these sentimental follies the answer lies ready in Mill: it is a gross presumption on the part of any man, nay, on the part of any woman, to lay down what is forever to be done, and what not to be done, by all women. Who are you, forsooth, that the human race is to live by your directions? And if your directions, moreover, are admittedly always changing, who can be sure that any one of them is ever right for anybody?

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[1] *Sesame and Lilies*, 5th ed., p. 136.

Ruskin is, so far as my reading goes, the most self-contradictory writer who ever lived. He stultifies himself as vehemently as Carlyle, and for the same fundamental reason, that he is just a talking temperament; but he meddles with far more matters than Carlyle did, and dogmatises proportionally. In his art criticism he has a first principle for every day of the year and every hour of the day: pictures and practices are for ever being praised or blamed under general laws set up for that occasion only. At one time he will denounce as unworthy all writing for money: at another he will present as model lives those of Shakspere and Scott, who systematically wrote to make money. In the earlier *Lectures on Art* he lays it down that the highest subject for the artist is the human face and figure: in a later lecture he pooh-poohs figure-painting as being within the reach of anybody, and sets up landscape as the really difficult and noble work. But he contradicts himself in the same book, sometimes in the same chapter, sometimes in the same page.

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[1] *Crown of Wild Olive*, p. 143.

[2] *Sesame and Lilies*, p. 149.

One result of his temper is that his criticisms of individuals are often outrageously unjust. He forbids Harriet Martineau's books to the pupils who surrender to him their docile judgments, "not because she is an infidel"—he admits Voltaire freely because "his voice is mighty among the ages"—"but because she is a vulgar and foolish one." Yet he goes on to admit that some of her writing in "Deerbrook" is entirely admirable; and he proceeds thus to excuse his abuse:—

> "I use the word vulgar here in its first (!) sense of egoism, not of selfishness, but of not seeing one's own relations to the universe. Miss Martineau plans a book, afterwards popular, and goes to breakfast, 'not knowing what a great thing had been done.' So Mr. Buckle dying, thinks only—he shall not finish *his* book. Not at all whether God will ever make up *His*."[1]

The memory of Harriet Martineau, who, whatever might be her natural exultations over her successes, was one of the sanest of writers in her self-estimate, will survive such an attack, from a man whose notions of his "own relation to the universe" have reached heights of extravagance seldom attained in black-on-white. But the attack on Buckle calls for a warmer reprobation. Had I read it without knowing its author, without knowing it was made by a mouthpiece of passionate caprice, I should have been disposed to call it the most meanly ungenerous impeachment I ever saw in secular literature. And the most malignant of priests, one would think, would have scrupled so to handle the pathetic cry of the dying scholar who left his work undone.

It all comes of lack of patience and lack of care for consistency, which two lacks are correlative to the prophetic temper of overweening self-confidence and the self-worship which poses as Theism.

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[1] *Fors Clavigera*, New Series, Letter 3, vol. viii., 1878, p. 76, *n.*

The worst of it all is that the genius seems to be correlative with the unwisdom; that the man has his eloquence and his dazzling flashes of insight on condition of a prophetic fury which will not stay to reconsider; that the command of language rests on an over-balance of that faculty, which keeps him chronically at the mercy of verbal allurements, leading him into those etymological mysticisms over which Arnold shrugged his shoulders; and that the burning moral earnestness is bound up with the primitive habit of theosophy which he acquired at his mother's knee, so keeping him to the last a possessed Scripturalist, turning to the old Hebrew literature, genuine and forged, for principles of present conduct, as Cromwell's pikemen did. With such an all-round lack of security for good judgment, no child of impulse can miss giving men occasional stones for bread and occasional poison for medicine. At times Ruskin seems to have triumphed over the darker human passions, and to have attained to hating war and judicial murder; but anon he warms with the old evil fires, and presents you with an execrable homily on the nobleness of true war as a means of deciding which is the best man—save the mark!—which has "the strongest arm and the steadiest heart," as if these meant the best heart or the wisest head; and again you will have pæans to the hangman that might have made Carlyle feel his occupation gone.

VIII.

The name of Carlyle brings us to a final and comparative summing-up of these friends. They greatly admired each other, Carlyle mixing his admiration with criticism, Ruskin mostly observing the discipular attitude. What had they then in common? Nothing at all of the love of art which was Ruskin's point of departure. Carlyle contemned art,[1] and derided its devotees, while Ruskin's doctrine is well summed up by himself in the admirable formula: "Life without Industry is Guilt; Industry without Art is Brutality." And Ruskin has written of Mr. Froude, Carlyle's other leading disciple, that one of his "deadly disadvantages" is that he has "no knowledge of art nor care for it."[1] The main bond of union between the two writers, as we said before, in studying Carlyle, is just the spirit of hostility to modern developments, which in both of them led to a profoundly fallacious exaltation of the Middle Ages. This being so, we must say of Ruskin, somewhat as we said of Carlyle, that his value lies in his stimulant energy, his power of disturbing vulgar complacency, and confronting human selfishness with higher motives and urgent menaces. Both men do this while themselves wilful egoists and prone to egregious error; whence the Nemesis of disregard and refutation which follows them. But if we compare the amounts of their really effective criticism of the life around them, the penetrating power of their exposition, and above all, the range of their active relation to life, we must, I repeat, give Ruskin the higher place. He could not possibly go more profoundly wrong than Carlyle, though he might commit himself oftener; and if in some respects Carlyle sees human things more truly, his hold of that which lay immediately under his eyes is less prehensile than Ruskin's. In fine, the disciple has improved on the master as regards the task of awakening the age to its practical needs; and if the result exhibits itself too slowly to satisfy his passionate insistence, it is none the less in process. When the spirit of science comes to grapple resolutely with the tasks which have hitherto been undertaken by the enthusiasts, the prophets, the zealots, it will be found that none of them all has more potently prepared the way than this wayward genius, with his thunderbolts of eloquence and scorn, and his undying passion for the better life. He will not live to see the transformation he has thus furthered, but his name and his work shall not be forgotten.

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[1] *Life of Sterling*, part ii., ch. vii.; Carlyle-Emerson *Correspondence*, i., 148; Emerson's *English Traits*, ch. xvi.

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[1] *Fors Clavigera*, New Series, Letter 4, March 21, 1880, p. 114.

HERBERT SPENCER.

I.

In all the criticisms of life we have surveyed thus far, with the exception of Mill's, it has lain on the face of the matter that the critics have passed large judgments on relatively little knowledge, and have been much more prone to sum up the universe than to ascertain what it consists of. Carlyle not only abominated the scientific study of human affairs, but, with a presumption hard to associate with real superiority of mind, cast senseless scorn at those ideas in natural science which were revolutionising human thought under his eyes. Emerson, far more sanely receptive to new knowledge, was himself, as we saw, one of the most discontinuous, or, as Mr. Birrell calls him, "non-sequacious," of thinkers; and helped us rather with tonic sentences and bracing elevation of spirit than with connected views of human affairs. Arnold, again, though he did not realise that extremity of scientific ignorance which his father was willing to see combined with a proper zeal for Christian and political philosophy, was influenced by science only so far as a man of liberal culture in these days cannot help being; and continued to the end, with obstinate suavity, to see life with the eyes of a man of letters, finding the best culture to lie in "the best that has been thought and said" by writers whose thinking had not been very hard, and remaining convinced that only the talismanic virtue of certain ancient sayings and examples can keep mankind on the right road in conduct.[1] Finally, Ruskin, though he has flashed his electric light into natural as into social science, is, as we have seen, essentially a man of visions, often true, often false, with no principle of synthesis save a Theism which merely presents the universe in terms of his wayward temperament. It is only in Mill that we have found a right or steady perception of the very simple truth that since all feeling, so-called, proceeds upon perceptions or notions, those feelings are likeliest to be right which come of the fullest knowledge and the most careful reflection, reflection being simply the process of comparing and checking one feeling with another.

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[1] It should be noted to Arnold's credit, however, that he plainly preached, at least once, the doctrine of control of population. See *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 246.

But Mill, for one thing, was not wholly vowed to science, half his life being spent in official work, honourable and beneficent but obscure; and for another thing he came too soon to gather up a sufficient store of modern science, even in history and sociology, for a comprehensive criticism of life, even if he had had the range of faculty, of appreciation and coördinating power, for the work. On various lines he carried human knowledge perceptibly forward. In logic he advanced all analysis by at least one stage; in economics, even in recasting old fallacies, he visibly disintegrated them, and he brought the science within full view of a truly political as distinguished from a merely commercial economy, doing especial service by his enforcement of the master principle of control of population; while in practical politics he gave reasoned and convincing demonstrations of the value of those yearnings for freedom in men and women, which so often exhibit themselves in unrectified emotion, and so become a favourite target for the somewhat cheap criticism of the philosophic Conservative, and the cheaper sneers of his less pretentious comrades, who hate all sentiment, save the worst sorts. With all this, however, Mill leaves immense lacunæ in his philosophy; and in particular he represents, save in his practical grasp of the population question, the defect of valid biology which has underlain all political and moral philosophy down till almost our own day, and which is indeed glaring in much of the sociological writing of the moment, after Spencer has shown the true path. It is even since Spencer began his undertaking that anthropology has been reduced to something like scientific form, so that he has not only profited by material which was not available for Mill's early culture, but must have greatly enlarged his own horizon, since he first planned his life's performance. It is to Spencer, then, among English writers, that we look for what unification of human knowledge is yet possible. After Comte, he is the first modern who has attempted such a synthesis; and he has had the immense advantage over Comte of working on the lines of a theory of evolution, in large part projected by himself before Darwin, and since rounded by Darwinian biology.

II.

And there is one personal difference between Mill and Spencer which is very significant in this connection. Of Mill we know, from his friend and biographer, that

> "He was absolutely without any feeling of rivalry, or jealousy of other men's success. His originality and fecundity of ideas would not have exempted him so completely from the dread of being anticipated in his discoveries, or baulked of his credit, had he not possessed a fund of generosity of character, for which sympathy is another name. He poured himself out in conversation, and his ideas were caught up and used, with or without acknowledgment; but he never disturbed himself one way or other. Of this part of his character," adds Dr. Bain, still more emphatically, "I can speak absolutely, and not by a figure of speech, under which we may turn a part into a whole. In other virtues, he had his limits, but in this he had none."[1]

I do not think the most thorough-going admirer of Mr. Spencer would attempt to apply such an eulogy to him. He has been noticeably careful of his credit: he has disputed over his alleged debts, and been more careful, on the whole, to affirm his rights of reputation than to apportion to his predecessors their share in his doctrines. A certain avarice of ideas, an enduring thirst for fame, seems to have been needful to keep at the top of his speed the undertaker of such a task as his. It should be taken as a datum rather than as a blemish in his personality. When

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[1] Prof. Bain, *J. S. Mill*, pp. 155-6.

Magellan's ship came home from that first voyage round the world, with only the immortal memory of the heroic heart which had wrought the triumph, and which now lay mouldering in a nameless Pacific isle, did men honour that heart the less because an intense egoism, a boundless ambition, had borne it up through the long stress of toil and frustration, against mutiny, and strife, and inward doubt? With such overcharges of self-will are men's frail bodies fitted for great things, for vast schemes of thought, or for swift flights of force, according as the cerebral machine is framed. And that figure of Magellan's ship is not inapt in another sense; for as the crew who first circumnavigated the planet came home captainless, sorely worn and tried, so has the voyage round the sphere of human knowledge borne hardly on the thinker who has planned it; so hardly that indeed it may not be he who will complete the scheme. But even if he had not fully revealed the course; even if he had only sought heroically to achieve the impossible, the spectacle of the effort would be none the less inspiring. Even when the baffled explorer's ship comes home from the search for the north-west passage, with riven timbers and tattered sails, and with the faces over the bulwarks showing wan and weary, do men cheer the less because the pole has not been won? And shall we give less honour to the thinker who greatly planned and toilsomely conducted, through a whole generation, the immense survey of knowledge of which the sifted results now stand secure for us in the volumes of the *Synthetic Philosophy?* If we knew aright how to value the rarest manifestations of energy, we should honour this shattered circumnavigator as no explorer has been honoured for his few years of effort.

And why do we not? Because, for one thing, of the prevailing tendency to estimate genius in terms of brilliancy and the show of excitement. Ruskin has somewhere remarked how, if a man only wear his hair long and look animated, we are at once ready to credit him with peculiar powers, while if he look ordinary we presume he is commonplace. So with books; if they tingle with passion and rhetoric, like Ruskin's own, we say: Here is inspiration, here is genius; and often enough we may be right; but where we find noiseless persistence of thought and unruffled sobriety of speech, even if the thought be obviously beyond our depth, we use some other word than genius, as if we thought great thinking power were rarer than literary brilliancy. Now, it is assuredly not so. And when the mass of men are trained to appreciate relative intellectual values—their lack of which training is the rest of the cause of Spencer's moderate share of public honour—they will recognise that a great analytic and synthetic thinker is one of the crowning products of literature and science.

Emerson well described the main part of Carlyle's literary gift in his phrase about the "devouring eyes and pourtraying hand;" but is it only the "portrait-painting eye" that is to command our interest and admiration? Here is an eye that devours in turn, with patient hunger, whole provinces of knowledge, whole kingdoms of nature, not merely cataloguing their contents, but working out their laws and relating them with passionless care to the whole scheme of things. The primal energy, the awful periodicity of the universe, the variations of forces, the transition from what we merely call energy to what we specially call life, the laws of that, the next development in consciousness, the laws of that, from the simplest to the most complex phases, the beginnings of conscious and formulated morals, the rise of religion, the principles of social cohesion, of rise and fall—all these come alike to this insatiable intelligence, which seeks to make them all its own, taking no man's reasoning on trust, but seeking to recast and rectify at every step, and to link all truth together in an unbroken chain of consistency. What a task, what a patience, what a power! Are we to put these lower than the passionate outbursts of wilful men of letters who work a while and idle a while, and lash themselves up on the same themes from time to time without bringing to the business an atom of decisive new knowledge or any notion of new or deeper analysis? There are readers and writers who classify so. For Matthew Arnold, even, Spencer is a formal and didactic writer, to be named with Benjamin Franklin and Jeremy Bentham as a producer of drily instructive and uninspiring prose. Well, there is a tendency to justice in things, a "something not ourselves"—the total of other people's selves, in fact—"which makes for righteousness;" and one day, when Matthew Arnold is paragraphed in culture history in small type as a fine poet, some of whose pieces endure, and a writer of graceful and limpid essays, interesting to the specialist in criticism as illustrating an early stage in that art, the name of Spencer will perhaps be one in the bead-roll of the great intelligences which from age to age, with various good fortune, came forward to the greatest of tasks, and make the vow that underlies the vaunt, "I take all knowledge to be my province." In literature and science there arise from time to time, what old histories vainly fabled of societies, men who become fathers of great tribes; and if there be one in England in our day it is Spencer.

In the words of Mr. Lester Ward:—

> "Strictly speaking, only three comprehensive cosmical principles have yet been enunciated, only one of which is yet universally accepted. These are: 1, the law of gravitation; 2, the nebular hypothesis; and, 3, the development theory. The attempt of Herbert Spencer to combine the two latter in connection with the first into a universal theory of evolution approaches nearer to the complete unification of science than has ever before been done. In fact, the idea embraced in the word evolution as employed by him is by far the nearest approach ever yet made to the conception of an absolutely universal and cosmical law."[1]

And if, recoiling from the attempt to realise the truth of this by a study of the *Synthetic Philosophy*, you master only a single minor work of its author, *The Study of Sociology*, or even the still smaller book on *Education*, you will find yourself faced by a range of practical observation and a degree of generalising power which, had there been no other manifestations of them, would have sufficed to reveal an original and commanding intellect.[2] And this holds true of the former book, in despite of its errors and fallacies—for I am going to try to prove to you that some of the final doctrines in *The Study of Sociology* are fallacious as conclusions, however instructively led up to. It would be the extremity of presumption to think of critically estimating the *Synthetic Philosophy* in one or two lectures; and the bulk of our discussion will turn on that and one or two other books.

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[1] *Dynamic Sociology*, New York, 1883, i., 8.

[2] *Education* has been translated into thirteen languages, including Chinese and Japanese.

III.

Of the man who has achieved this performance we know little. He has not been publicly gossiped about as Carlyle and Emerson were in their lifetime; and what one has heard privately it is not now in good taste to publish. What is common property is that he was born at Derby in 1820, of a cultured stock, his father being a teacher of mathematics, and his uncle a philanthropic clergyman of the Established Church.[1] From these two relatives he received, it would appear, the bulk of his education, which, however, conformed little to the conventional practice. He was trained to be a civil engineer, and practised his profession from the age of seventeen till twenty-five, when the decline of the railway mania, which in that period had reached its height, left him, as it left Dr. Tyndall, under the necessity of finding some other avocation. Then it was that he turned to literature. He had already tried his hand on professional themes in professional journals; and there is reason to believe that if civil-engineering had remained for him a lucrative employment, the *Synthetic Philosophy* would never have been written. But even at two-and-twenty he had contributed to the *Nonconformist* newspaper a series of letters, later republished as a pamphlet, on *The Proper Sphere of Government*, in which the key-note of his future practical sociology, it would seem, was already struck. To practical sociology, accordingly, he now turned, beginning it, like so many others, as a journalist. From 1848 till 1853 he acted as sub-editor of the *Economist*, of which he had become a standing contributor, as he was of the *Westminster* and other reviews; and it was in 1851 that he produced his first considerable work, *Social Statics: or the conditions essential to human happiness.* His culture had been eminently practical and scientific. We learn from his note on Arnold in *The Study of Sociology*,[1] that he had, "when young, effectually resisted that classical culture which Mr. Arnold thinks needful," and that he knows "absolutely nothing of the masterpieces of ancient literature in the original, and very little in translation." On reading which, we may be sure, Arnold shrugged his shoulders with conscious superiority, though the avowal was made in a passage which convicted him of having praised as perfect a sample of Addison's style which was flabby and feeble to a surprising degree. And yet who can doubt that Spencer's culture, though it is needlessly defective on the side of ancient literature, is as a whole far more efficient for the comprehension of life than Arnold's, of which ancient literature was a main part? One such test case outweighs all Arnold's easy arguments.

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[1] See an interesting biographical passage on this uncle in *The Man versus the State*, p. 20.

It is a remarkable circumstance, this determinedly scientific preparation of Spencer at a time when no one in England seemed, on the surface of literature, to dream of approaching mental science on any save literary lines; and it is encouraging, as reminding us that at this moment, in our midst, there may be growing up minds which will one day cast in shadow and oblivion all the loud welter of pietistic platitude which just now seems like to overbear reason. When the second half of the century had just begun, there lived in London a group of three friends, Spencer, George Henry Lewes, and Marian Evans, all of them then little known, who may be said to typify in their different ways the master-forces of a new intellectual age; Spencer, as co-ordinating thinker; Lewes, as literary man turned scientific investigator; and George Eliot, as introducing the scientific spirit into fictional art, thus representing at once the new factor of intellectual womanhood and the new destiny of science. And it is interesting further to note that while the leading critics of life then before the English world—Carlyle, Mill, Macaulay, Ruskin—were all of Scotch stock, these three are distinctly English, as English as Hallam—unless Mr. Grant Allen should prove that the Evanses and the Leweses are Welsh. They present a virtually new tendency in English affairs; and it is yet further noteworthy that while Lewes, as being originally literary, had intercourse with Carlyle, as had Mill, and Emerson, and Ruskin, Spencer seems never to have had any leaning that way. We can imagine what Carlyle would have said of him, and what he thought of Carlyle. "Sawdustish," would doubtless have been one of the elder sage's epithets. And yet Spencer's talk can hardly have been that for anybody. George Eliot's chosen friends could not well have been dull;[1] and you will find in Spencer's books little correspondences with things in hers which suggest remembered conversations of theirs. In the *Social Statics*, for instance, there is this passage:—

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[1] Ed. 1873, p. 415.

> "There are people who hate everything in the shape of exact conclusions. . . . Ifs, and buts, and excepts, are their delight. . . . They have so great a faith in 'the judicious mean' that they would scarcely believe an oracle if it uttered a full-length principle. Were you to enquire of them whether the earth turns on its axis from East to West or from West to East, you might almost expect the reply—'A little of both,' or 'Not exactly either.'"[2]

You will find that passage closely paralleled in George Eliot's *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, and in her essay on Lecky's

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[1] Lewes wrote of Spencer in his journal, January, 1859:—"I owe him a debt of gratitude. My acquaintance with him was the brightest ray in a very dreary, *wasted* period of my life. I had given up all ambition whatever, lived from hand to mouth, and thought the evil of each day sufficient." [On this compare Lord Acton's citation of Varnhagen von Ense, in his article on George Eliot, *Nineteenth Century*, March, 1885.] "The stimulus of his intellect, especially during our long walks, roused my energy once more, and revived my dormant love of science. His intense theorising tendency was contagious, and it was only the stimulus of a *theory* which could then have induced me to work. I owe Spencer another and a deeper debt. It was through him I learned to know Marian . . ." Mr. Cross's *Life of George Eliot*, ii., 76.

[2] *Social Statics*, ch. ix., pp. 120-1.

Rise and Influence of Rationalism; and the crisp, pictorial beginnings of most of the chapters in *The Study of Sociology* recall much of George Eliot's method.

IV.

All alike, the three friends had outgrown the popular religious creed; but their thought for a time exhibited somewhat different stages. In the *Social Statics* Spencer is still vaguely theistic, with a touch of Fichte. In the chapter entitled "The Divine Idea and the Conditions of its Realisation," he assumes the greatest happiness of mankind to be "the creative purpose;" and in this harmless form the "Divine Idea" recurs in the book. How long this phase lasted is not clear. *First Principles,* projected in 1860, is definitely agnostic; but *Education,* published in 1861, has many theistic expressions. In *The Study of Sociology,* published in 1873, there is frequent satire of conventional theism, of phrases about "The Great Artificer," "The Master Builder," "the hand of the Almighty," "the strategy of Providence," and so forth;[1] but in *Education* we have a passage on that grand epic written by the finger of God upon the strata of the earth;"[2] and on the thesis that play is better for children than gymnastics, we learn that whoever forbids their play "forbids the divinely appointed means to physical development."[3] The presumption is that *Education* was written some time before its publication; for since *First Principles,* Spencer's vocabulary has always been sanely scientific.

The *Principles of Psychology* had been published as early as 1855, and soon won a high standing;[4] but *First Principles* began the issue of *The Synthetic Philosophy* in part to subscribers. This form of publication its author continued for a number of years, during which time his financial experience

[1] Pp. 29, 33, 298, &c. [2] Small ed., p. 41. [3] P. 155.

[4] See the early praise of Mill, *Logic,* B. ii. c. 7, and *Auguste Comte and Positivism,* p. 72.

in the matter of defaulters led him to the conclusion that the Secularists and the clergy were nearly on a par; which, it must be confessed, is severe on the Secularists.[1] There is evidence that at once the power and importance of the new philosopher were fully recognised by capable readers, Buckle[2] being among the first to bestow warm praise. And when we consider what that book does for enquiring minds in the way of reducing a miscellany of ideas to luminous order, it is not easy to find any praise for it that is too high. How many a young intelligence has entered as it were a new sphere of order and coherence at the contact of Spencer's generalising thought, as the sand scattered at random on the surface of the demonstrator's disc trembles and divides into rhythmic lines at the touch of the vibration-giving bow, under a law mysterious as life itself.

The attention of the general public in England and America has been unprofitably fastened for the most part on a mere side issue of the book, by the controversy set up in the name of Positivism by Mr. Frederic Harrison on the significance of the word Religion. It is difficult to get further from true Positivism than is done in that controversy, which really turns on nothing but the question whether the word Religion is to mean your moral and practical relation to your fellow-creatures, or your final generalisation as to the nature of the universe. Spencer, taking Religion in its historic sense to signify the total of cosmological and theological beliefs, undertakes to establish a final reconciliation between Religion and Science by showing that in the end both rest on the conviction that the Universe is an Incomprehensible Mystery. "A permanent peace," he says, "will be reached when science becomes fully convinced that its explanations are proximate and relative; while Religion becomes fully convinced that the mystery it contemplates is ultimate and absolute."[1]

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[1] *Study of Sociology*, Note 3 to ch. xv. It would be interesting, by the way, to know how Mr. Spencer identified his Secularists. Did they describe themselves as such in subscribing?

[2] In the "List of Authors Quoted," prefixed to his first volume, and in note 145 to his chapter on "The Scotch Intellect during the Eighteenth Century" (3-vol. ed., iii., 364).

Now that is certainly, to start with, a sufficiently hollow and verbalist proposition; so much so that it almost calls for modification of the statement that at this stage Spencer's vocabulary has become sanely scientific. The so-called reconciliation borders very closely on the grotesque. Religion and Science are to be finally reconciled, observe, when Religion has abandoned every dogma and every positive belief, and takes the shape of a final negative proposition that Science never rejected, and has long affirmed. For I venture to say that Spencer, while accurate in saying that Science has repeatedly "stopped short with superficial solutions,"[2] is wrong in representing these failings as "all along a part cause of its conflict with Religion," and in implying that Religion has forced Science forward. For, as he himself shows, these very superficial solutions were one and all solutions in terms of Religion, and constituted religious victories, not intrusions on the religious sphere which Religion repelled. It never was and never could be Religion that forced men to give them up. When men said that "Nature abhorred a vacuum," and called that Science, they were, in the terms of Spencer's own definition, speaking religiously. Where then was the conflict there between Religion and Science? Religion never complained of these things: it was new critical Science that complained of old uncritical or religious Science. The whole argument collapses; for in the terms of the case it is the sound Science and not the unsound that conflicts with Religion. Then what good has Religion, as such, ever done to Science? Forced it to admit the final mystery of things? Why, Science never denied that at any stage, and has been affirming it for centuries. Saying that Nature abhorred a vacuum was not denying mystery but asserting it, and vetoing analytic research as vain. The constant bane of Science has plainly been the submissive falling back on religious solutions after a little had been done to invalidate and discredit these; and Mr. Spencer completely obscures the real nature of the case when he represents those acts of submission to Religion as acts of "trespass on the province of Religion." The breakdown of the argument is here shrouded in a metaphor which covers two contrary significations. The act of *submission* is figuratively and unwarrantably described as an act of *trespass:* two processes of absolutely contrary significance, submission and opposition, are confounded; and the act of passage into captivity is identified with invasion, under a metaphor about Science entering on the territory of its rival. Into such snares, or such devices, can great thinkers at times fall in their devotion to a pet verbal theorem. Even in stating that Religion has helped to force Science out of unscientific because religious positions, Mr. Spencer indicates a partial perception that the facts are otherwise:—

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[1] *First Principles*, 3rd. ed. p. 107. [2] *Ib.* p. 105.

> "Partly," he writes, "by the criticisms of Religion, which have *occasionally*" [not habitually, observe, as the main argument would require] "called in question its assumptions, and *partly as a consequence of spontaneous growth,* Science has been obliged to abandon" its "attempts to include within the boundaries of knowledge that which cannot be known; and has so yielded up to Religion that which of right belonged to it."[1]

Here is worse confusion than before. "An attempt to include within the boundaries of knowledge that which cannot be known" is a meaningless description of such a doctrine as that Nature abhors a vacuum, and that the attributes of gold are due to a principle of aureity. These are simply verbal pretences of knowledge beyond what is known, and amount to saying, "That which is, is," in a roundabout way which tends to disguise the nullity of the proposition. The phrase, "attempt to include within the boundaries of knowledge that which cannot be known," would much more plausibly describe Mr. Spencer's own proposition about the Infinite and Unknowable Energy, though I do not want to object to that as a final formula on the boundary line of knowledge. And what, in the next place, is the meaning of the statement that in abandoning a meaningless phrase Science has "yielded up to Religion that which of right belonged to it"? Mr. Spencer can not have been joking in *First Principles:* he cannot have meant merely to insinuate that meaningless phrases rightly belong to Religion; that it is the function of Religion to talk about the aureity of gold and the horologity of clocks. What then did he mean? Why, nothing; for again he has lost himself in equivocal metaphor, thus showing vividly enough the danger of discussing philosophical issues in metaphors. While he was looking down on the philosophers who posited the aureity of gold and the vital principle in organisms, he was himself falling into exactly the same snare. For in what sense is Religion more real than aureity, or Science than the vital principle? What are these, as he has used them, but verbal metaphors? There are only, in scientific fact, religious persons and scientific persons, who more or less mix up their religious and their scientific notions, or rather, who call certain of their notions religious, and others scientific, for no better reason, as a rule, than that they take the former wholly on trust, and the latter more or less on intelligent comprehension. To talk of the strife of the religious and the scientific people, or of the conflict of the religious bias with the scientific bias, as a conflict between Religion and Science, is to use a metaphor that is helpful by its brevity only so long as you remember what the concrete facts are;[1] and you really lose all hold of these facts when you talk of Science "yielding up to Religion that which of right belonged to it." To say that Religion has any right of possession in even a true proposition is really much more idle than to talk of the dormitive virtue of opium,[2] for that phrase symbolises the real fact that when you take opium you are likely to sleep, whereas there is no objective fact whatever symbolised by saying that any truth rightly belongs to Religion. And doubly idle, worse than idle, does the phrase become when you are using it in regard to a set of propositions which are admittedly false.

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[1] *First Principles*, p. 107.

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[1] Thus, Dr. Draper's work on the *Conflict between Religion and Science* is sound, because he is always historically tracing the conflicts of opinion among religious and scientific men. It is the generalising philosopher who falls into assumptions of unreal entities.

[2] It is surely time to admit that after all these phrases had a certain restricted use as metaphors, or rather as symbols. The scientific derision of them has grown very stale, having been made a philosophical commonplace at least a hundred years ago by Hume, after being set agoing by Molière; and I hardly know a single writer that repeats it who does not himself frequently use equipollent phrases in all unconsciousness.

For Spencer himself finally destroys these metaphorical positions of his with all possible completeness. His final consolation to the religious people is that there is only one of all their notions that is valid, and this solitary notion is one that turns out to be at bottom strictly scientific—the notion, namely, that the Universe is finally incomprehensible. What, then, is the meaning of saying that Religion has any "right" in any proposition whatever? The one thing left to it is identification of itself with the final negative proposition of Science. That is to say, the "reconciliation" of Religion and Science consists in Religion, as such, disappearing: the "permanent peace" is attained when one combatant has eaten the other up, leaving not even the tail. All that ever constituted concrete or affirmative Religion has been consumed, while concrete or affirmative Science goes on continuously extending its limits. I do not know whether many people continue to call themselves religious who take satisfaction in that singular reconciliation. A clergyman lately professed to find himself, as a religionist, in substantial harmony with Spencer, and so opened up a new vista of the possibilities of dishonest clerical maintenance of meaningless dogma and ceremonial. But I may here point out that, on the face of Spencer's own reasoning, his predicted reconciliation will simply mean that the word Religion will finally cease to have any present application, and will signify only "old-world superstition," or "ancient cosmogony and legend." To which I for one have not the least objection. But I object to adopting consciously the grim irony of the Spencerian formula to the effect that Religion thus reduced to the mummy state has been blissfully "reconciled" with its surviving rival. The phrase recalls the rhyme about the

"young lady of Riga
Who went for a ride on a tiger:
They returned from that ride

With the lady inside,
And a smile on the face of the tiger."

You would hardly say in her epitaph—if you set up a symbolic gravestone—that the lady and the tiger were reconciled.

V.

But if Spencer's theorem of the final "reconciliation" of Religion with Science be thus nugatory, how much better is Mr. Frederic Harrison's strenuous vindication of the perpetuity of Religion, by the process of transferring the name to public morality, in other words, to moral science? If you can get people in general to agree to that transfer, well and good: a word is merely a counter whose value is determined by agreement; and you may make Religion mean astronomy if only you can persuade your fellows to accept and use it in that sense. But if they do not so accept it, what social harm has been done? If the generality of men, by force of habit, finally decide that the word Religion shall mean the body of irrational beliefs which it mostly covered in the past, and that morals and public spirit shall just be called morals, or civism, or anything you please, what can it finally matter? The practical question is not what Mr. Spencer calls his religion, or whether his religion and his morals are in contact, but what his morality or his practical sociology is, whatever name it be called by. And the position of Mr. Harrison simply amounts to this, that it is essential to our proper progress that the altruistic and social zeal which is to reconstitute society, though purified of all supernaturalism, shall be called Religion, and shall be accompanied by certain customary practices that shall take the place of the customary practices of the old supernaturalist systems. Here are two issues. First, is the retention of the name Religion as a name for one's scheme of civism or practical morality necessary to the healthy development of that morality? I do not see how positive Science, properly so called, can endorse Mr. Harrison's verbalism any more than Mr. Spencer's.

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In Mr. Harrison's sense of the term, every one who has any political and moral principles has some religion, good or bad, the Atheist and the Agnostic equally with the Comtist. Then it is the merest pedantry to make out that the abstract name we give to our set of social principles counts for anything in itself. The notion can only be made to look even momentarily plausible on the representation that something is gained by connecting in men's minds a name which formerly had the most impressive supernaturalist associations, with principles of human and social sympathy which formerly had but a partial connection with those. But here the claim is only made good by begging the question: by assuming that the word Religion retains its old impressiveness after the beliefs it mainly connoted have disappeared. Now, I for one do not care in the least which way the decision finally goes: the vocable Religion may be ruled by usage to mean something widely different from its old meaning, as so many other words have been. That its leading connotation in human history has been supernaturalist beliefs, I do not see how any one can deny; and that it has meant, not so much sincere thinking about the universe and humanity, as the general tendency to fixation of traditional ideas about the universe and humanity, seems equally clear. But there is no more absolute reason in the nature of things against shifting its significance than against letting the word mystery, which once meant something revealed, come to mean something that remains secret or unintelligible. It is when you attribute talismanic virtue to the use of one vocable rather than another that absurdity begins: and the absurdity is equal on the two sides of a quarrel on such a point. I for one can get on perfectly well without applying the word Religion to my civism or social principles; and it is thus far a matter of convenience to me to apply the term to the supernaturalist beliefs of my neighbours, as distinct from their practical morality and politics. But it would be a perfectly simple matter to let the word apply to these if the majority came to wish it; and Professor Huxley, for instance, was really guilty of unscientific and unworthy quibbling when, a number of years ago, he professed to resist those who sought to exclude religion from the schools, saying he wanted to exclude theology but retain religion. That talismanic use of the word was an affectation which would seem to have taken deep root a generation ago, for it appears in Spencer's *Education*[1] in a nugatory proposition, borrowed from Huxley, about scientific culture being more religious than non-scientific culture. Both writers were just talking like those earlier verbalists at whom they smiled for speaking of aureity and dormitiveness; and so closely does this vice of verbalism border on worse forms of error, that it is not surprising to find Professor Huxley quashing his own quibble about theology and religion, and going on to defend, in language of the most transparent inconsistency, the continued use of the Bible in the schools without comment, but with explanation, as if explanation were not comment. For which procedure, Dr. Huxley has paid the penalty in having in his old age to maintain against the voluble but primitive sophistries of Mr. Gladstone the most elementary positions of Biblical criticism, till the internecine garrulities of the combatants indirectly set up a new conviction that the Bible is not a book for the schools.

But if the professed men of science fall into verbalism, and from that into positive unreason, no less do the professed champions of the positive method in social science. Comte, who distanced both Mr. Spencer and Dr. Huxley in his strictures on the devotees of metaphysical ideas, of imaginary entities, falls himself into the same pit, and gives us volumes of allocutions on such metaphysical entities as Christianity, Protestantism and Catholicism, Chivalry, Woman, Humanity, the Proletariat, and the Spiritual Power, imagining all the while that he was giving us the science of these matters, when he had not even begun to apply the scientific method to them. And thus it comes about that, after Spencer and Comte—though Spencer has certainly improved in many ways upon Comte—our social science is in a multitude of points on a par with the physical science which posited aureity, phlogiston, and Nature's horror of a vacuum. Mr. Harrison, therefore, is only following his Master's lead when he insists, first, on the indispensableness of Religion as a name for humanitarian zeal; and further on the need for a set of routine practices which shall take the place of those of supernaturalism. That is just the theory of talismans in another form, and is being sufficiently refuted in the practice of Rationalists, who in general leave the Comtist practices alone. The acted unreason follows on the lapse into verbalism and pseudo-science. Dr. Huxley, who also verbalises on Religion, pronounces Comtism to be Catholicism *minus* Christianity: The Comtists might very well retort that Dr. Huxley's Religion for the schools is the Bible *minus* belief in it. And in the public interest it becomes necessary to declare that the battles of elderly gentlemen for their favourite words and sentiments and definitions are growing to be just as much of a public nuisance, when they are fought in the name of science, as when they are fought in the name of theology.

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[1] Small edition, p. 45.

VI.

As has been said, however, Spencer's share in these discussions raises none of the fundamental issues of his philosophy, and does not involve that general conception of universal evolution, which is his great contribution to modern thought and knowledge. I must, therefore, ask you to remember that some of the greatest qualities of his mind, and some of his most valuable services to science, are seen in analyses and demonstrations with which these lectures cannot deal, and with which, indeed, the greater part of the criticism passed upon him does not deal. The majority of us are interested in sociology, or in philosophy considered in relation or antagonism to theology; but only a few work at the problems of cosmic evolution and the principles of biology and psychology. And as Spencer's philosophy and sociology yield to many critics on analysis a good many flaws and fallacies of detail, and the few experts similarly pronounce his biology and psychology to be fallible, it may seem as if in general we make him out to be untrustworthy. But even if we did that, as regards the bulk of his details, we should not have destroyed his title to pre-eminence in respect of the grasp and essential rightness of his scheme of thought. In point of fact, as the patient reader of any of his books knows, he abounds in happily-stated particular truths and generalisations; and the points on which criticism successfully fastens are never such that their correction overthrows or undermines the fabric. For instance, as we have gathered from his argument about religion and science, he is not a born metaphysician: he has not that alertness of insight into the intricacies of language which enables a thinker in general to avoid fallacy and carry forward the processes of mental analysis. He has not the serene security of Hume. Thus his treatment of the old question of the nature of knowledge lays him at times open even to the criticism of theologians; for men whose own positions are contradictory and irrational can at times detect inconsistencies in those of other men, and are wont to make such discoveries a pretext for reaffirming on their own side doctrines and dogmas that will not bear a moment's examination. A logical blunder of Spencer's is turned to the credit of the doctrine of the Trinity or of Predestination. Let us give no harbour to such logic in our criticism of his. Even the most flagrant fallacies of the Agnostic demonstration in *First Principles* do not invalidate its Agnosticism.

Take, for instance, the section of the chapter on "Ultimate Religious Ideas" in which he discusses in turn the Atheistic, the Theistic, and the Pantheistic formulas of the Universe. Of each in turn he contends that it is unthinkable, and fails to solve the problem. "The Atheistic theory," he says, meaning the formula of self-existence, "is not only absolutely unthinkable, but, even if it were thinkable, would not be a solution. The assertion that the Universe is self-existent does not really carry us a step beyond the cognition of its present existence; and so leaves us with a mere re-statement of the mystery."[1] Similarly he dismisses Pantheism; and of course he makes short work, though it might have been shorter, of the contradiction-in-terms that "the Universe is the result of an external agency," which is Theism proper.

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[1] Ch. ii, sec. 11, pp. 31-2.

Now, in the two former cases he has, from his own Agnostic point of view, done nothing to invalidate the formulas he criticises. He can only make them seem invalid by making the assumption that Atheism and Pantheism profess to "explain" the Universe in a sense in which Agnosticism does not. Whatever pretext there may be for that assumption as regards Pantheism, there is none as regards Atheism. Atheism is just the negation of all Theisms, and is thus fundamentally on all fours with Agnosticism. Spencer's own final position is the assertion of an Infinite and Incomprehensible energy, which, all the while, he admits to be as unthinkable as the self-existence of the Universe. It is obviously just another form of the same proposition (which again becomes identical with Pantheism as soon as Pantheism is reduced to consistency), and so in the end we have the critic adopting exactly the doctrine which, under the title of Atheism, he had dismissed as unthinkable, and as being no solution. His final teaching is that there *is* no solution, and that the furthest reach of our thought takes the shape of affirming the unthinkable. And, in view of that other polemic about the word Religion, one is forced to conclude that again a prepossession in words, a touch of the passion for aureities and vital principles, led the philosopher to argue down a doctrine whose name he did not like, though it was scientifically identical with his own.

Here, we see, the fallacy, though not easily excusable, is not fundamental, since it is not a part of the main demonstration, and we have only to omit the passage in order to put matters right. So, again, in the chapter on "Ultimate Scientific Ideas," the superficial preliminary reasonings on Space and Time do not affect the final Agnosticism, though they are unsatisfactory enough in themselves. "To deny," says Mr. Spencer here, "that Space and Time are things, and so by implication to call them nothings, involves the absurdity that there are two kinds of nothing,"[1] which is, I think, quite the oddest argument ever framed on that subject. It is less reasonable than saying that when you declare Smith and Jones to be both dead or absent, you are alleging that there are two kinds of death or absence. What is "a nothing"? If Mr. Spencer had worked out that question at the start, he would have saved a good deal of mis-spent argumentation. But still these gratuitous errors of logic do not impair the value and importance of his analysis of knowledge, and still less his cosmic synthesis. And if, on the other hand, in his sociology the critical conflict with his doctrines is more serious, as involving opposition to his final prescriptions, it remains none the less true that even in regard to practical politics he has done more than any modern writer to co-ordinate the necessary knowledges. Indeed, just as in certain problems of economics Mill brought us, by his attempts to consolidate fallacies, within sight of true doctrines, so does Spencer, by his attempts to justify his negative or nihilist positions in sociology, bring us face to face with the pure science which annuls them. The history of his political development is itself a chapter in practical sociology.

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[1] P. 47.

VII.

At the outset we have him concerned, indeed, to define the sphere of government, but also concerned to secure that government shall proceed upon certain principles of justice, rigidly deduced from the Law of Equal Liberty, which is the golden rule of ethics. But here, inasmuch as his ethical had outrun his biological and sociological thinking, he committed himself to one position, that of the equal right of all to the land, which could only be made practically valid by the qualification that there should be communal restraint on the numbers of new claimants placed on the land by procreation. That difficulty Spencer entirely evaded in the *Social Statics,* though it had been distinctly pointed out by Mill; and though since then he has dealt specifically with the population problem, he has not sought to recast his early argument for the nationalisation of the land, but has at length explicitly repudiated it, after tacitly doing so for many years. He now affirms the impossibility of applying absolute ethics to the case; and inasmuch as he has more and more stringently opposed the tendency to seek the political redress of social injustices, we are entitled to regard his repudiation of his early political ethics as arising from the same mental tendency as is revealed in his polemic against the sins of legislators. That that polemic is powerful, and often unanswerable, no candid judge will deny. But if it is part of a development which involves an acceptance of admitted social injustice, we are entitled to surmise that it may have a temperamental rather than a scientific basis.

And yet, when we turn to the companion case of Darwin, whose temperament was so nearly perfect, and note how he too misapplied the evolution principle, we ought perhaps to put it that every scientific method in turn will lead us into fallacy when we seek to carry it beyond a particular plane of phenomena. Darwin, after partly working out the origin of species and the descent of man, in terms of the law of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, gently but explicitly opposed the proposal to restrain population, on the score that this would minimise the struggle which had created civilisation in the past, and which must needs carry it on in future.[1] That conception I put to you as a fall into the great snare of evolutionist sociology—the tendency to *read the law of evolution backwards.* Darwin did this precisely at the point where his biology connected with social ethics; and Spencer, I shall attempt to show, does the same thing in his application of sociological data to present practice. Both thinkers assumed that a generalisation which sums up the progressive forces of a collectively *unconscious* society, of a society *without* the conception of evolution and of a universal sociology, must equally sum up the progressive principles of a collectively *conscious* society, a society which has realised evolution and is constructing a universal sociology. Though they themselves are our greatest helpers towards such consciousness, they have failed to realise that our attainment of it must revolutionise human history. They have wrought out for us in the main the principle of past progress by struggle for existence; they have, at the point of transition, failed to perceive aright that the master formula of future progress must of necessity be "the struggle *against* the struggle for existence."[1]

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[1] See his letter to Mr. G. A. Gaskell, in appendix to Miss Clapperton's *Scientific Meliorism*, p. 340; and Mrs. Besant's *Autobiography*, p. 136.

In this, after all, there is nothing strange, nor need there be in it, for thoughtful students, anything disappointing. Spencer's own analysis of organic rhythm, of psychological and sociological progress, prepares us for stoppages and stages in all men's thought; for contraction after expansion, as in the motion of the worm; for the refusal of a mind to expand afresh, on a new career of innovation, after expending its energies in an effort of innovation through a whole cycle of its existence. If he lays down the torch, he does what others did before, what will be done after him by those who now insist on carrying it on when he would fix it. His arbitrary termination is obvious to us only because he has himself prepared us to proceed; and, remembering that, we shall not rail because he has rounded his period, but rather acclaim the magnificent sweep which he has compassed.

VIII.

In Spencer's philosophy, as its title implies, one unbroken process of law connects all phenomena, from the motion of molecules and the courses of the suns to the phenomena of human thought and the destinies of nations. The *Synthetic Philosophy* coincides with the formula of Professor Huxley, that "the molecular structure of the cosmic gas stands in the same relation to the phenomena of the world as the structure of the clock to its phenomena;"[2] if, that is, we add the proviso, not clearly put by Professor Huxley, that the infinite cosmic clock is one of perpetual motion, the infinite energy of the universe pervading it. This doctrine, which is Materialism proper,[3] usually raises in the mind of the student, at first approach, the everlasting question as to whether we are then in the position of mere factors in a chain of causation over which we have no control. That is one of the typical problems of philosophy, and according as we are or are not able to thread our way through the toils of language, we either answer it logically or remain for life entangled in theology. Clearly, in terms of Materialism, all our thoughts and actions are the outcome of all our antecedents, and it is literally true that what we do we cannot help doing. But inasmuch as all our conscious action is in terms of our thought processes, it lies in the terms of the case that we choose what we shall do—choice being simply the form or phase through which the cosmic energy becomes apparent in us to ourselves and each other. There is thus no possibility of circumventing the law of causation; for if we decide, with Schopenhauer, to mortify the Will to Live, on the score that we are merely its puppets, we shall be just the same the puppets of the Will to Die, and can no more transcend destiny in the one case than in the other. If the human race should ever come to the view that its existence is not worth maintaining, that view will be just as absolutely an outcome of thought and necessary choice as is at present the choice to do what seems best for promoting life.

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[1] A phrase first used, I believe, by Lange. See the biographical sketch in the *History of Materialism*, Thomas's trans., p. xiii.

[2] *Critiques and Addresses*, p. 306.

[3] Professor Huxley at times disavows Materialism as positing only "matter and force and mechanism." It is idle to make such statements

Materialism, then, leaves us not less but more clear than does theology as to the indefeasibility of Will and Choice. To talk of a surrender of Volition is simple blundering, for any conceivable act of surrender *is* Volition. We are left then to the absolutely unclouded recognition of the play of Motive, Bias, and Persuasion, as the inevitable antecedents of choice; and what Materialism has done for us is to save us from those interpolations of spurious motive and spurious persuasion with which theology distracts

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without explaining how the so-called Materialist defines the terms matter and force. Professor Huxley writes as if their connotations were perfectly certain and invariable. I know of no "Materialism" which is, so to say, *more* "materialistic" than his own. But, like too many of our English thinkers, he is more concerned to evade compromising names than to clear them up.

human affairs. Aspiration, Persuasion, Choice, are as much fulfilment of law as any natural process whatever; and the comparison and clash of different aspirations and choices is as strictly natural as the reactions of chemical substances and the life of the lower animals. Spencer has put the bearing of this on conduct with a somewhat noteworthy deprecatoriness:—

> "Whoever hesitates to utter that which he thinks the highest truth, lest it should be too much in advance of the time, may reassure himself by looking at his acts from an impersonal point of view. Let him duly realise the fact that opinion is the agency through which character adapts external arrangements to itself—that his opinion rightly forms part of this agency—is a unit of force, constituting, with other such units, the general power which works out social changes; and he will perceive that he may properly give full utterance to his innermost conviction: leaving it to produce what effect it may. It is not for nothing that he has in him these sympathies with some principles and repugnance to others. He, with all his capacities, and aspirations, and beliefs, is not an accident, but a product of the time. He must remember that while he is a descendant of the past, he is a parent of the future; and that his thoughts are as children born to him, which he may not carelessly let die. He, like every other man, may properly consider himself as one of the myriad agencies through whom works the Unknown Cause; and when the Unknown Cause produces in him a certain belief, he is thereby authorised to profess and act out that belief. For, to render in their highest sense the words of the poet—
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> "'Nature is made better by no mean,
> But Nature makes that mean; over that art
> Which you say adds to Nature, is an art
> That Nature makes.'
>
> Not as adventitious therefore will the wise man regard the faith which is in him. The highest truth he sees he will fearlessly utter; knowing that, let what may come of it, he is thus playing his right part in the world: knowing that if he can effect the change he aims at—well: if not—well also; though not *so* well."[1]

It is, I take it, the measure of the influence of religion in stupefying the general intellect that these words should have needed to be written at this stage of civilisation. By religion, I mean not any one creed, but that spirit which conserves creeds, and which establishes men in the notion that what Spencer loosely calls the Unknown Cause has only set up human opinions in particular cases in the distant past, or only does so now in occasional response to special invocation. The insane notion of "inspiration" fostered among us by Christianity has brought about the notion that Paul, say, was inspired, but that Clifford has escaped the control of Omnipotence, and represents human opinion wholly out of relation to the force or purpose of the universe. So overwhelming is the bias of the religious temper to intellectual atrophy (and this, remember, is like everything else a manifestation of universal law), that those sects which in modern Christendom sought to bring the notion of inspiration into practical and comparatively logical relation with life by aiming at inspiration in their own members' persons—an aim fully active in Cromwell and his soldiers—have one and all dwindled and virtually disappeared under the incubus of past-worship, which they illogically and fatally cherished. So potent is the spell that the would-be positive religion of Comtism is under our eyes crystallising into a fixed Church, dreaming over its quasi-inspired founder. And when a not very profound neo-theological professor broaches even the semi-rational conception that "all that is great and good is inspired,"[1] there is a start of surprise or a shudder of horror in English society, though five minutes' connected reasoning might have led even a theological professor to see that error must be just as much "inspired" as truth, whether on the more consistent theistic or on the non-theistic conception of the universe.

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[1] *First Principles*, end of Part I.

Observe, too, how even Spencer must fumble in his terms, tautologically announcing that a man's body of opinions is "not an accident," and "not adventitious," as if there could be any meaning in saying that it was. If even evolutionary philosophy is still in the stage of discovering that men's tendencies and aspirations may "properly" be given "full utterance" to, as being on the whole as much an outcome of cosmic force as the fall of an avalanche, or the leap of a tiger, we may expect to find even evolutionists slipping back at times into some form of the prepossession against innovating effort, the more so because the innovating evolutionist is clearly bound by his principles to check his "inspirations" by logic and evidence—that is to say, by the test of consistency. We saw in studying Carlyle, and Emerson, and Ruskin, how the revived prophetic conviction of inspiration, guided only by the old prophetic notion of the process, means endless blusterous contradiction and unreason. The evolutionist may well seek to avoid these. But just as the humdrum modern religionist, in the sphere of pietism, was led by the follies and ineptitudes of the inspirationists to set his face against their doctrine of continuous inspiration, and thus to reduce his religion to inanition, so does the evolutionist, looking in experience for knowledge that will safeguard him from unwise impulses and tendencies in conduct, run the risk of repudiating new departures indiscriminately. Thus must evolutionist still battle with evolutionist, as theologian did with theologian, only more decently, and without the old resort to murder.

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[1] Professor Momerie, in *Wit and Wisdom*, Dec., 1890.

IX.

Now I, being in my turn a small scintilla of the cosmic force, am moved to persuade as far as I can those who will listen to me, that there are things to be done which our great evolutionist philosopher thinks are not to be done. The outcome of his practical teaching for society in his middle period, before he grew quite conservative, turns out to be this: That we mostly miscalculate in our attempts to control social affairs by systems of government, and that the part of wisdom for us is to limit our attempts to a few forms of primary protection of individuals against each other, making these protections much more efficient than they are, in the faith that by so doing the secondary protections we now so often vainly seek to effect will become unnecessary. This is, I think, a fair statement of that Spencerian doctrine of twenty years ago, which Professor Huxley then not very fairly styled "Administrative Nihilism."[1] Used comparatively, the term may be justifiable; but there is so much of cogency in Spencer's argument, and so little has been done to carry out even what he prescribed, that our first duty is to note the positive and practical side of his position. It seems to me strictly true that, as he says, a great deal of modern philanthropic legislation has missed its mark, has failed to do what it was meant to, and has even done actual harm instead of good. And there is much force in his contention that a really efficient system of justice, "prompt, effective, and *costless to the aggrieved*," would preclude a great deal of suffering. But it is very significant that while such a system of justice might be supposed to be one of the first reforms for which Individualists would contend, there is no visible movement to that end. When I lately set about drawing up a plan[1] of such a reform, aiming at getting rid at once of the two ancient evils of costly law, and the insane frustration of jurisprudence involved in the system of setting hired sophists, called barristers, to confuse the mind of a judge, outwardly venerated in a revolting mediæval fashion, and in actual fact often infirm physically and by probable consequence enfeebled mentally—when I set about drawing up such a scheme I could not find any previous one to help me, though it may be taken for granted that some have been drawn up by individual reformers. What is more, Spencer himself has not agitated with any persistence for any such reform; and his last book is almost wholly devoted to exposing the miscalculations, or the burdensome tendencies, of attempted reforms of other kinds. A system of costless justice must clearly involve an apparent new burden to society; and Spencer's constant subsumption has latterly been that all apparent burdens in the form of new public outlay are real levies on all citizens' individual shares of property, making these shares less than they would otherwise have been, and in no way tending to promote the general wealth. Let us see then in detail how he relates to conduct in his applied sociology.

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[1] See the essay reprinted in Huxley's *Critiques and Addresses.*

In his first book, *Social Statics*, as we saw, he maintained on grounds of absolute ethics the equal rights of all to the land: a principle which, I repeat, is only valid under the qualification that those who are on the land at a given moment are collectively entitled to prescribe, if they see fit, limits to the number of children produced by individuals; since otherwise the most unconscientious are free to burden the rest to an indefinite extent with the maintenance of their superabundant offspring. But Spencer, always evading the question of deliberate prudence in procreation, is found twenty years later, in 1871, arguing explicitly that "the immense majority of the evils which government aid is invoked to remedy are evils which arise immediately or remotely, because it does not perform properly its negatively regulative function," and that "*everywhere* . . . we shall find that were the restraining action of the State prompt, effective, and costless to those aggrieved, the pleas put in for positive regulation would nearly all disappear."[1] Here, there is the assumption that if, without any measure of land nationalisation, we thoroughly reformed our judicial system, social evils would so generally disappear that preventive legislation would hardly be called for. And here again the gravest error is fallen into through evasion of the population problem; for it can easily be demonstrated that no reform of the judicial system can possibly prevent the evils which arise under our industrial system from the blind multiplication of not only the proletariat but the other classes. The sociologist has given up his early ethical position on the right to the land; but he has not done so for the proper reason; and, missing or evading that reason, which would have led him to modify and not abandon the position, he takes up a new position equally untenable, and virtually claims that only certain negatively-regulative action, which he specifies, is needed to secure substantial social well-being. And now, after nearly twenty years more, he is found no longer even arguing that his proposed negatively-regulative action will minimise social evil, but explicitly laying it down that the miseries under our social system are "caused by the ill-working of human nature but partially adapted to the social state;"[1] recognising no probability of that ill-working being appreciably obviated by any line of collective action; but stringently insisting that most of the suffering of the poor is due to their own fault—though he still never once points to blind procreation as the central evil—and that we ought to leave them to their suffering, on the ground that that, and that alone, is curative.[2]

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[1] Sketched in the *National Reformer*, May 11, 1890.

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[1] "Specialised Administration," *Fortnightly Review*, December, 1871, p. 652. *Essays*, iii., 165-6.

Now, it may freely be granted to Professor Huxley that this last development is, practically speaking, to be described as Administrative Nihilism. But what again is Professor Huxley's title to sit in judgment on such shortcoming? Certainly he has of late ostensibly recognised the pressure of the problem which Spencer and our legislators have evaded. "The political problem of problems," he declared the other day, "is how to deal with over-population; and it faces us on all sides."[3] But how then does he propose to deal with it? Let us hear his own words:—

> "Over-population has two sources: one internal, by generation; one external, by immigration. Theoretically, the elimination of Want is possible by the arrest of both. . . . This is substantially the plan of the 'Closed Industrial State' set forth by Fichte; and, so far as I can see, there is no other social arrangement by which Want can be permanently eliminated. . . . *I offer no opinion whether Fichte's Utopia is practically realisable or not.*"[4]

And this is the end! This after a life of sixty-five years, largely occupied in passing judgment on social questions and criticising other people's social proposals. There is Nihilism and Nihilism; and to spend your life, on the side of your sociology, in pragmatically controverting other people's theories of action; to get the length ultimately of repeating one positive principle which has been earnestly maintained by many others before you at the risk of social ostracism, while you stood silent; and after all to announce that you have nothing to propose—this is, on the whole, about as disastrous a sort of Nihilism as any. What Professor Huxley *has* the courage and enthusiasm of his opinions about, is the unsoundness of the political theories of Rousseau, which nobody now reads; the theological absurdity of Mr. Henry George, who is followed only by untrained reformers; and the mental and physical inequality of men, which nobody ever denied. But when it comes to acting on the recognition of the "problem of problems," to counselling the people on how they may achieve the restraint of over-population, which is the one "social arrangement by which Want can be permanently eliminated," then the pragmatist has "no opinion to offer." It is the final expression of his essentially negative mind, which kept him denying evolution till the proofs were sufficient to stagger even bigots; set him controverting Spencer's so-called Nihilism without indicating a notion of what ought to be really done; and kept him opposing the exclusion of superstition from the schools, till he was fain himself to make a stand in order to exclude it from the forum. Thus may you contrive to have it formally on record that you were right, while the upshot of your career remains negation or practical nullity. I for one have small thanks to offer to a publicist who at the eleventh hour announces his agreement with those who proclaim that increase of population is the problem of problems, and then contentedly leaves those who will to bell the cat and take the odium of educative propaganda; proceeding to concentrate his own polemical powers on endless and laboriously sarcastic controversy about the miracle of the devils and the swine, after its significance has become a standing commonplace for artisan Secularists. Professor Huxley affects to meet protests against his pragmatism by suggesting that the crossing-sweeper fulfils his function in clearing the path. Well, the figure was sufficiently unfortunate; for the London crossing-sweeper's labour is, as a rule, visibly a vain display, a factitious sweeping of the already-swept, while acres of mud lie around, or an officious show of cleansing where there is no dirt. And if Professor Huxley is satisfied to be a crossing-sweeper in sociology, he must be content to have the distinction of such an one.

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[1] *The Man versus the State*, p. 39.

[2] *Ib.* pp. 18 19, 28, etc.

[3] Art. on "Government, Anarchy, or Regimentation," *Nineteenth Century*, May, 1890, p. 865.

[4] *Ib.* pp. 865-6.

X.

A criticism of Spencer in a constructive and not a pragmatic spirit, starting from the Neo-Malthusian position, will supply a practical and not merely a formal answer to his Nihilistic protests. It is true that our legislators have made multitudes of useless and even injurious laws, just because they have never honestly faced the population problem. As in Spencer's own excellent illustration, they have struck directly at the bulge in the iron plate.

> "You see," he writes in *The Study of Sociology*, "that this wrought-iron plate is not quite flat: it sticks up a little here towards the left—'cockles,' as we say. How shall we flatten it? Obviously, you reply, by hitting down on the part that is prominent. Well, here is a hammer, and I give the plate a blow as you advise. Harder, you say. Still, no effect. Another stroke? Well, there is one, and another and another. The prominence remains, you see; the evil is as great as ever—greater, indeed. But this is not all. Look at the warp which the plate has got near the opposite edge. Where it was flat before it is now curved. A pretty bungle we have made of it. Instead of curing the original defect we have produced a second. Had we asked an artisan practised in 'planishing,' as it is called, he would have told us that no good was to be done, but only mischief, by hitting down on the projecting part. He would have taught us how to give variously-directed and specially-adjusted blows with a hammer elsewhere: so attacking the evil not by direct but by indirect actions. The required process is less simple than you thought. Even a sheet of metal is not to be successfully dealt with after those common-sense methods in which you have so much confidence. What, then, shall we say about a society? 'Do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?' asks Hamlet. Is humanity more readily straightened than an iron plate?"[1]

An excellent illustration, indeed. But observe its significance. There *is*, on this admission, a way of straightening humanity, if you can find it. But where in Mr. Spencer's latter-day doctrine is that way hinted at? Why, even in *The Study of Sociology* we are as good as told that we must leave our crooked iron plate to the action of the atmosphere and its own molecular forces. It is true that mere prohibitive legislation does next to nothing to put down drunkenness; it is true that Building Acts have not stopped jerry-building; and that Acts regulating industry often become a dead letter, as an Eight Hours Law will be, if we get it. But is there no way of improving warped society: is there not a Social Dynamics as well as a Social Statics? The old notion of nationalisation of land: would that not be an efficient blow—if only we could at the same time control population? The reduction of the National Debt, to the end of removing a great burden from industry, would that not be a well-directed stroke? The socialisation of public monopoly profits, as those of railways, banks, gas-works, water-works, would that be a mere bungler's blow on the bulge? Yes, answers the latter-day Spencer; the socialisation of public monopoly profits, by any means whatever, is only a step towards "the coming slavery."

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[1] As cited, pp. 270-1.

See now the ethical and social attitude to which the sociologist has progressed. He has formulated a doctrine of Absolute and Relative Ethics, which, applied to politics, seems to come to this: That Absolute Ethics prescribes imperatively certain primary functions, negatively regulative, on the part of the State—protections against murder, robbery, violence, fraud, and breach of contract—as being absolutely right; while beyond those protections we are in the sphere of Relative Ethics, which is a matter of choosing between different evils or inconveniences.[2] It is absolutely right, and cannot possibly do harm, to give those primary protections, as it is absolutely right for a mother to nourish her child even at a sacrifice to herself; but there is a point at which her self-sacrifice on behalf of the growing child might do more harm than it would prevent: and as this point is approached the question becomes one of Relative Ethics.

I submit that the use of the terms Absolute and Relative in this distinction is illicit, and a hindrance to right perception of

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[1] See *The Man versus the State*, p. 38.

[2] I give this as what seems to me a fair practical statement of Mr. Spencer's doctrine of Absolute and Relative Ethics, which, however, it is almost impossible to reduce to a distinct proposition. See *The Data of Ethics*, ch. xv.—and compare Mr. Collins' valuable *Epitome of the Synthetic Philosophy*, pp. 541-3.

the issues. By Ethics we mean the co-ordinated rules for right social conduct, and either all of these rules are absolute or all are relative. When it is a case of choosing between two evils, there is as truly an absolute duty to take the best course as there is an absolute duty to do what is obviously right in any other. The terms are irrelevant: the distinction would properly be between immediate and contingent, or primary and secondary expediencies. Now, we know historically that the social or governmental functions which Mr. Spencer prescribes as absolute, though their necessity is more readily apparent than that of the functions he would disallow, were themselves only gradually assumed; and that civilisation has been a progress from merely mutual individual check on self-assertion to the establishment of certain collective checks, more or less efficiently carried out. For a long time even murder was not restrained by collective action; and the resort to collective action in that case was a process which would in Mr. Spencer's terminology come within the sphere of Relative Ethics, since it came of a gradual recognition that the evils of retaliation and feud were greater than the evils of judicial costs and the burdens of social machinery. That is the formula of all political movement. As Mr. Spencer sufficiently indicates, there is no true limit conceivable to the development of conviction as to the ethical necessity or expediency of a given collective function: the question is simply one of right choosing in successively perceived emergencies. And it is becoming very evident that in relation to many of us Mr. Spencer stands in the position which was doubtless taken up by early Conservatives in opposition to the reformers who sought to bring about the collective punishment of murder and theft. He has become reconciled to the private ownership of the land, which he once felt, and which we now feel, to be unjust and inexpedient. He is grown acutely conscious of the evils of mistaken legislation, and of regulative machinery which limits the freedom of a minority of the citizens; but he has now apparently no eye at all for such evils as the existence of an increasing idle class, who get the best of all things while doing nothing for them, and whose existence is thus a plain limitation to the freedom and the well-being of the greater part of the community. He dwells on the burden of taxation laid on the ratepayers, but he would remain tolerant of the ultimate incidence of all burdens on labour, and of the allotment of the minimum ration to the man whose work is hardest.

Thousands of years ago, sociologists saw that social inequality, the amassing of wealth in the hands of the few, was fatal to the endurance of States, and many attempts were made to check the tendency. It is incredible that Mr. Spencer does not in theory recognise the evil; but when he now meets with even a well-considered attempt to obviate it, by the municipalisation of public monopolies, his one thought is, not satisfaction at the socialisation of income which otherwise enriched a few and helped to extend the idle class, but alarm at the limitation of freedom which he takes to be implied in the extension of social machinery—this without asking whether the freedom that is limited is not of the kind which "Absolute Ethics" would disallow. He has come to sympathise actively with the class who, under existing arrangements, gets the plums in the cake, and only passively with the rest of the community; and when he is talking of the citizen and the ratepayer he is thinking not of the many but of the few. He actually applies to the mass of the poor the maxim: "He that will not work neither shall he eat," as if poverty mostly came of unwillingness to work; and as if the people with large incomes were usually the hardest workers.[1] Opposing those windy Socialists who propose instant confiscation of the railways, he speaks as if all the present shareholders were men who had originally risked their property to create the lines; and wholly evades the question whether it is expedient that the descendants and successors of these men should draw a perpetual tribute from the industry of the nation for one particular act of service rendered in the past. He admits, presumably, that we ought not to be free to leave unfenced pits on our ground beside the public path, or to let our chimneys smoke into our neighbours' windows; but he never asks whether the unrestricted power of bequeathing wealth and endowing an idle posterity, whom, under our system, other peoples' posterity must perforce serve, whether this is not a mere freedom to injure society, which society ought to abolish. The Law of Equal Liberty seems wholly to have disappeared from his ethical system.

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[1] *The Man versus the State*, p. 19. In this connection it is only fair to note that the philosopher has been angrily contemplating the tribe of loafers, and is not directly speaking of unemployed workers in general. But he has no right to generalise as he does even about the apparent loafers; and his talk about "the law that a creature not energetic enough to maintain itself must die," is a strange evasion of the plainest social facts. Thousands in the richest classes are "not energetic enough to *maintain themselves*" independently of their unearned endowments.

If we turn from cases which raise questions of calculation, or secondary feeling, to some which may be said to raise questions of primary feeling, the position becomes still clearer. Mr. Spencer, arguing that we must not separate pain from wrong-doing,[1] in which he includes improvidence—that we should leave certain suffering to go on, as being curative—complains as warmly of the State payment of poor children's school-fees, and of the proposal to give them public dinners, as he does of any other public act. Here, be it observed, we are virtually asked to regard the suffering of the helpless children as the proper punishment of their parents, and not to consider the children as individuals at all: a position which, there need be no hesitation in saying, is a step towards the destruction of all social ethics, which rests finally on the biological fact of sympathy. What was his own ethical argument against the practice of gambling? That "this kind of action is essentially anti-social—sears the sympathies, cultivates a hard egoism, and *so* produces a general deterioration of character and conduct."[2] What better description could be given of his own attitude towards the problem of the starving children?[3]

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[1] *The Man versus the State*, pp. 19, 28.

[2] *The Study of Sociology*, p. 306.

[3] Since this was written, it has been announced that Mr. Spencer has joined the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Secretary of which had, just before, circulated a gross aspersion against the holders of views on religion similar to those of Mr. Spencer. But it does not follow that Mr. Spencer wants to save the children of the poor from elimination by distress.

Needless to say, this attitude towards the suffering of children is becoming more and more nearly impossible for civilised people who stop to think of the matter; and here we reach a biological statement of our difference from Mr. Spencer, namely, that a sympathetically-cognised evil which to an ever-increasing number of us is intolerable, is to him tolerable. Oddly enough, our great sociologist, admirably equipped in so many ways, at length turns out to be in one way temperamentally ill-adapted—to use one of his own words—to the social state now developing. And who shall say how far the maladaptation is the result of the stress of intellectual preparation for the sociological task?

XI.

Dealing with that case of the suffering children constructively or practically, we shall find in it a typical case for applied or dynamic sociology. Spencer points back, not unplausibly, to the case of the old Poor Law, which so multiplied pauperism, and created a class of women who were sought in marriage on account of the number of their illegitimate children.[1] Without saying that the reformed Poor Law left these children at a given moment to starve, Mr. Spencer virtually tells us to leave the slum children of to-day to starve. Not a word even now of telling the wretched parents how to avoid having more children. Spencer's position on the population question is finally an enigma to me, for while exposing the hallucination of Doubleday, still shared, it would appear, by many Socialists and others, as to the effect of good feeding in checking fertility, he appears to rest simply on a dubiously optimistic hypothesis that a *very* high civilisation will one day lessen fertility irrespectively of any deliberate prudential restraint.[2] In point of fact, the desperate need for prudential restraint *now* is demonstrated every day under his eyes; but still he breathes no whisper of the possibility of instructing the masses on the subject. Why, has he not committed himself to making light of the value of instruction, in order to establish his caveat against national education? If he recognises any means by which improvident parents can learn, it is the logic of suffering—suffering which involves the starvation of children. The one motive power on which he has any reliance is the whip of the fear of hell-upon-earth—which, in point of fact, never does drive men on the right path in this matter, and which is far more likely to goad to infanticide than to prudence. And now turn back to the book on *Education*, written thirty years ago, and see how the earlier Spencer delightedly embraced the truths that those juvenile criminals who have been whipped are those who most frequently return to prison,[1] and that the method of freedom and kindness in lunatic asylums is found to answer best. Measure the distance that the Sociologist has retrograded, when he is landed in the position that by kindness and sympathy you can manage the insane, but not the sane!

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[1] *Study of Sociology*, pp. 103-4, 368-9.

[2] See the *Principles of Biology*, ii., 483 *et seq.* Cp. the present writer's pamphlet (Forder, Stonecutter Street) on *Over-Population*, p. 13; and a criticism of one of Mr. Spencer's recent utterances, in a paper in the *National Reformer*, Feb. 15, 1891, on "The late Constance Naden."

Why it is that the thinker who wrote the book on *Education*, with its insistence on the need of training the young for parenthood, should thus ignore the possibilities in regard to the spread of practical knowledge, is hard to divine. I can reach no explanation but this, that successive anxieties to maintain an original position against the views of others, and to enforce a particular theory against resistance, have led him in one direction to ignore and discountenance Neo-Malthusianism, and in another direction to depreciate National Education by belittling all education. The exigencies of this argument have led him into more than one flat contradiction. In repelling Matthew Arnold's old charge against the English, of being lacking in ideas, he reprehends the "notion that effectual practice does not depend on superiority of ideas. This," he says, "is an erroneous notion. Methods that answer are preceded by thoughts that are true."[2] In another chapter of the same book, criticising Comte, he writes thus:—

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[1] As cited, p. 121.

[2] *The Study of Sociology*, p. 220.

> "When, for instance, he (Comte) speaks of 'the intellectual anarchy which is the main source of our moral anarchy'—when he thus discloses the faith . . . that true theory would bring right practice; it becomes clear that the relation between the attributes of citizens and the phenomena of societies is incorrectly seen by him: the relation is far too deep a one to be changed by mere change of ideas."[1]

Now, on this fallacy-breeding question of ideas and feelings, Comte contradicted himself often and grossly, not merely in one book as compared with another, but in different portions of his *Discours sur l'ensemble du Positivisme*, making sometimes ideas, and sometimes feelings, paramount. But here we find Spencer in one book falling into just such a contradiction, laying it down in one chapter that right or effectual practice results from true ideas, and in another that true ideas in no way ensure right practice. This last proposition he repeats at length in his *Reasons for Dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte*, urging that "the world is governed or overthrown by feelings, to which ideas only serve as guides."[2] And all the while the true and scientific solution of the dispute lies embodied in his own *Principles of Psychology*, in the declaration that

> "There exists a unity of composition throughout all the phenomena of intelligence. . . . The most complex processes of reasoning are resolvable into intuitions of likeness and unlikeness between terms more or less involved. When regarded under its fundamental aspect, the highest reasoning is seen to be one with all the lower forms of human thought, and one with instinct and reflex action, even in their simplest manifestations."[3]

That is to say, the antithesis of feelings and ideas is spurious, and new knowledge *is* a basis of changed action, because feeling and reasoning are only earlier and later stages of a mental activity proceeding from perceptions.

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[1] *The Study of Sociology*, p. 329.

[2] *Reasons*, p. 37; *Essays*, iii., 69. I have discussed this dispute at some length in an article, "Ideas *versus* Feelings; a Question of Definition," in the *National Reformer*, April 19 and 26, 1885.

[3] *Principles of Psychology*, 3rd ed., ii., 291-9. The same conclusion was reached long ago by Destutt de Tracy, *Élémens d'Idéologie; Logique*, 2e édit. p. 185.

When, however, we turn to Spencer's most elaborate and dispassionate discussion of the principles of social action, we find a baffling and paralysing set of conclusions, which, while affirming endless progress, seems to veto every step in it. In *The Study of Sociology* we have an admirable set of chapters on the need for and the difficulties in the way of reaching a Social Science; on the various kinds of bias; and on the different kinds of discipline and scientific preparation needed—discipline in logic and mathematics, and preparation in biology and psychology. And what is to be the end of all this preparation? It is really the most singular upshot for such a treatise. Mr. Spencer does not hope, he tells us, to do more than influence a reader here and there,

> "in his calmer moments, to remember how largely his beliefs about public matters have been made for him by circumstances, and how probable it is that they are either untrue or partially true. . . . Recollecting this, he may be induced to hold these convictions not quite so strongly; may see the need for criticism of them with a view to revision; and, above all, *may be somewhat less eager to act in pursuance of them.*"[1]

So far as it goes, this might simply be the good old advice not to be hasty; but Mr. Spencer means more than that. He does not merely mean that social reformation must be slow: that is a lesson we all learn soon enough. He virtually lays down the suicidal doctrine that no change of ideas among men, no propagation of new opinions, can count for anything in hastening social development.

> "The surface of the Earth," he tells us, "has been sculptured by forces which in the course of a year produce alterations scarcely anywhere visible. Its multitudes of different organic forms have arisen by processes so slow, that, during the periods our observations extend over, the results are in most cases inappreciable. We must be content to recognise these truths and conform our hopes to them. Light, falling upon a crystal, is capable of altering its molecular arrangements, but it can do this only by a repetition of impulses almost innumerable. . . . Similarly, before there arise in human nature and human institutions, changes having that permanence which makes them an acquired inheritance for the human race,

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[1] *The Study of Sociology*, p. 391.

there must go innumerable recurrences of the thoughts, and feelings, and actions, conducive to such changes. *The process cannot be abridged;* and must be gone through with due patience."[1]

Now, I submit to you that fallacy pervades this proposition from first to last. We are asked first to conclude that social progress is necessarily about as slow as the course of geological and zoological change, which is an assumption totally opposed to all historical experience. Social progress is indeed slow relatively to all our hopes, but it is rapid in comparison with the transmutation of species; and to compare it with that, or with geological change, or with the action of light on crystals, is to obscure all the facts by a spurious analogy. What is more, social change varies very much at different times, the highest rates of motion being coincident with the highest developments of collective social consciousness. Now, the very existence of that legislation which Spencer girds at, the very existence of that sociological literature which he has done so much to extend, proves that the collective consciousness is in these days quickening throughout the world. What is it that most surely determines variation in species? Change of environment; and the true analogy is that as the mental environment changes, as our intellectual life changes, so will our social framework alter. But change of conditions goes on more and more rapidly, or becomes more and more possible, as we rise in the scale of consciousness. The face of the earth indeed changes slowly from age to age, save for catastrophic episodes, which are not to be overlooked. But organisms are capable of changing their environment by locomotion; and when they do, there is set up biological variation. Yet again, a human society, without changing its physical environment, can rapidly alter mentally on coming in contact with another society of different culture; and all the notable civilisations of which we have much knowledge represent this reaction of societies and cultures upon each other, a secondary civilisation growing rapidly on the stimulus of others which are primary to it—the Greek upon the Asian, the Phœnician, and the Egyptian, as the latter upon the Ethiopian; the Chaldean upon the Akkadian; the Aryan Hindu upon the Dravidian; the pre-Spanish Mexican and Peruvian on those of previous races; the Roman on all those of the Mediterranean; the mediæval Italian on the Roman complex; the European Renascence on the Saracen, and on the stimulus of recovered antiquity; the modern European and American on the increasingly general interaction of all states in both hemispheres, of which the latest phase is the influence of Europe on Japan, and of Japan on Europe. Mr. Spencer may be defied to square his formulas with the case of Japan, not to speak of those others in general. And if these changes happen in societies in the mass, from the mere primary reactions set up by the contact of unphilosophic minds, how much further may not modification be carried when philosophic minds, that is, minds of extended consciousness, multiply, and impress their generalised ideas on the hitherto unreflecting multitude?

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[1] *The Study of Sociology*, pp. 402-3.

XII.

Mr. Spencer implies that this cannot happen: and certainly it will not if he could help it. But all the while he is fostering the development in his own despite, for his generalisations of the conflicting forces do but serve to extend that collective consciousness which furthers social evolution. His very polemic against *The Coming Slavery* is an admission that change of a kind is rapidly going on;[1] and he must needs fall back on the doctrine that this change will not be permanent—a doctrine which, by the way, he fails to relate to his analogies from physics and zoology. It is true that revolutions are followed by reactions; but where has he formulated the points at which evolution passes into revolution? The knowledge of the dangers of revolution is becoming part of the consciousness of those who seek for change; and the new perception newly conditions activity.

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[1] Since this was written, there has been published a little book on *The Principles of State Interference*, by D. G. Ritchie, in which, among some criticisms which I cannot but think ill-considered, there is an unanswerable confutation of Mr. Spencer on his own ground, as set forth in *The Man versus the State*, in this matter of actual political change. In the same breath he protests that societies *cannot* be changed by purposive action, and that modern legislators are really making such changes. See Mr. Ritchie's book, p. 47. Mr. Spencer's adherents may be defied to meet that criticism; the position must be shifted.

Mr. Spencer, indeed, is striving to set up another new condition by philosophising reactionism, for that is what he ostensibly does in *The Study of Sociology.* If his advice to all men to be "less eager to act in pursuance" of their convictions were equally taken all round, it would leave matters very much as they are, for in the terms of the case the Conservative would be less eagerly Conservative, while the innovator would be less eager to innovate. But, observe, Mr. Spencer is not a whit less eager to act on *his* convictions; and that is a hint of what will happen all round. Men whose consciousness has been extended will be less spasmodic than they were, as the civilised man is less spasmodic than the savage; but they will not be less persistent. What Mr. Spencer is really trying to do is to modify the enthusiasm of the Liberal and strengthen the inertia of the Conservative. Hear his conclusion:—

> "Thus, admitting that for the fanatic some wild anticipation is needful as a stimulus, and recognising the usefulness of his delusion as adapted to his particular nature and his particular function, the man of higher type must be content with greatly-moderated expectations, while he perseveres with undiminished efforts. He has to see how comparatively little can be done, and yet to find it worth while to do that little; so uniting philanthropic energy with philosophic calm."

Just see to what thoroughly unsound psychology we have finally come. The fanatic's "wild anticipation," that is to say, his fanaticism, is called useful as being "adapted to his particular nature," when it *is* his particular nature; and his "particular function," which is here made identical with his nature, had been previously made out to be the counteraction of the contrary type, which has no hopes or anticipations whatever. That is to say, the fanatic is really useful as counteracting "the man of higher type," represented by Mr. Spencer; for to this relation things must come, despite the philosopher's attempt to make out that he is neither Radical nor Conservative, but both, or rather something superior to either. In his chapters on the Theological Bias and the Political Bias, he re-introduces the Reconciliation of Religion and Science, and from that stepping-stone mounts to a species of reconciliation of Radicalism and Conservatism. The sentiment which is "alone properly called religious," we are told, is that "awakened by that which is behind Humanity and behind all other things;"[1] and this, we learn once more, is indestructible. And to such lengths can our Sociologist go on behalf of a formula, that he assumes and alleges that persons with an anti-theological bias are yearning for the abolition of this sentiment. "In presence of the theological thaw going on so fast on all sides, there is on the part of many a fear, and on the part of some a hope, that nothing will remain."[2] That is to say, the anti-theologers hope that in time people will cease to admit the admittedly scientific principle that an infinite Universe is inscrutable—which is as fantastic a misrepresentation as fanaticism itself could accomplish. "The hopes and the fears," Mr. Spencer goes on, "are alike groundless; and must be dissipated before balanced judgments in Social Science can be formed." Knowing something of the anti-theological bias, I am at a loss to know where that particular hope is cherished. My own bias will be glutted to satiety when the public gets the length of simply saying, with Science, that the Universe is inscrutable, and abandoning the mass of superstitions which now constitute Religion. And I have hitherto failed to meet a religious person whose sole fear was that Science would abandon the Agnostic basis. In point of fact, Mr. Spencer's ostensible superiority to both kinds of bias is nugatory: and his final quasi-practical proposition, that it is a good thing that a Liberal leader like Mr. Gladstone should be an Irrationalist,[3] is a stultification of his own earlier ethics of propaganda, and a plain fallacy in itself; for if the Liberal party in the mass were enlightened to the point of preferring a Rationalist leader, he would *not* be, as Mr. Spencer says, "out of harmony

[1] P. 311. [2] P. 313. [3] P. 395.

with our present social state;" and while the Liberal party is *not* enlightened to that point, it clearly cannot have such a leader. The formula here is simple verbalism. Mr. Spencer has merely reaffirmed the ancient proposition that "whatever is, is right," with the somewhat vacuous corollary "more or less."

So with the equation between Radicalism and Conservatism. The Radical, says Mr. Spencer, cannot see that the Tory is a wholesome check on his impracticable enthusiasm; the Tory cannot see that the established order is but relatively good, and that he simply prevents premature change.[1] Here we have a double argument-in-a-circle. The alleged change is "premature" only because the Tory is Tory; were there no Tory there would be no premature change. There might be mistakes, but that is not what is meant by "premature" change. "Neither," says Mr. Spencer, "fully understands his own function or the function of his opponent; and by as much as he falls short of understanding it, he is disabled from understanding social phenomena." What then would happen if they *did* understand social phenomena and their own functions? What does Mr. Spencer do, who thinks he understands them; and what do we do who have followed his demonstration? Simply carry on respectively, happily with rather more circumspection, our Toryism and our Radicalism! For Mr. Spencer is now to all intents and purposes a Tory, resisting all change, not as premature, but as being absolutely a change for the worse; and a very efficient Tory he is. His advice about being slower to act on conviction is clearly meant for the Radical, not for the Tory. The "man of higher type," we saw, is finally to moderate greatly his expectations, "*while he perseveres with undiminished efforts*"—an eminently practicable attitude, all will admit. He has to see that very little can be done, and yet to "find it worth while to do that little: so uniting philanthropic energy"—energy in doing very little—"with philosophic calm." In fine, he is to put his faith in Cosmos, and his hands in his pockets—for a strictly negative purpose. He is to form himself on the model of the good old nobility of Mr. Gilbert's rhyme, who,

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[1] P. 290.

"throughout the war
Did nothing in particular,
And did it very well;"

which I take to be the ideal of Toryism. But when the philanthropic energy on the other side is found to be growing too eager, too irreverent of Social Statics, the "man of higher type" receives a broad hint to join the Liberty and Property Defence League, and put his philosophic calm where he formerly kept his hands.

XIII.

And yet, while Mr. Spencer's ostensible political function has thus been to encourage the Conservative in Conservatism, and discourage the Liberal in Liberalism, it is probable that the actual effect of his teaching has been largely the reverse. What he has done for Radicalism has been to exhibit to it its mistakes: what he has done for Toryism, so far as Toryism reads the *Synthetic Philosophy*, is to shake its faith in permanence; for, as he himself indicates, the old Tory ideal did not cognise change as merely premature, but as sinful and ruinous. Toryism among evolutionists will remain: witness Mr. Spencer's own development; but it will never again be the purely primary instinct it was: the spell of the law of cosmic change is felt in its consciousness. He has sought to demonstrate that the evolution of a wholly conscious society can be no otherwise than as that of mainly unconscious societies; nay, that it can be no otherwise than as the mutations of absolutely unconscious matter, or of non-human species, unconscious as such. But that very theorem is itself an extension of consciousness; and the enlargement of mental boundary can never be undone, save by a social dissolution which lowers all the mental levels. There are clearly forces of social dissolution at work which, unchecked, might work such a degradation: forces of multiplication on the lower planes of social life which tend to swamp the higher life, and to re-establish religions and ideals which we had before been outgrowing. And for all Mr. Spencer has directly taught, that ruinous process might continue. He has advised us to let the miserable multitude, young and old, die in its misery; he has urged us to discontinue that national education which is thus far our most comprehensive measure of self-defence against the deadly malaria of multiplying ignorance; and he would have us defy the still more menacing contagion of deepening discontent? He has, in fine, counselled us to harden our hearts, that *so* we may rise to a higher morality, which means a completer sympathy. But it is a vain counsel. Hearts will not harden to command: that too is a cosmic process, and depends on the sum total of conditions. Instead of obeying him, we grapple with the great biological problem which it is his supreme mistake to have evaded; deciding that there is a way to help our fellows without multiplying helplessness: the way of knowledge, and of *applied* social science. We finally range ourselves with the new school which adds to the study of Social Statics that of Social Dynamics; and we disallow the teaching of the first masters in sociology as being only a beginning where they think it is an end. In the words of the author of *Dynamic Sociology*, we say of them, and in particular of Spencer, the greatest of them, that they "fail to comprehend the true nature of *art* as applicable to all departments of science. Perceiving that natural processes are genetic, they erroneously conclude that Nature's ways should be man's ways. They thus confound the essential idea of fine art with that of useful art, the imitation of Nature with the control of Nature. They teach the natural as the proper human method, whereas the latter is necessarily an artificial method."[1] It might be added that even this discrimination between natural and artificial concedes too much to Spencer, inasmuch as the conscious effort to conform to a way of life deduced from study as the most truly "natural" is as essentially "artificial" as any attempt to innovate. In fine, Mr. Spencer's virtual implication that certain political action is not really "growth," amounts to a stultification of his own cosmic philosophy. He ends in a notion of the "order of nature" which takes us back to a stage of thought before science.[1]

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[1] As cited, i., pref. p. vi.

And yet again, when all is said, how shall we measure our debt to the man whose wide achievement has laid the enduring foundation for this new art (which, let us never forget, is "an art which Nature makes"), and whose deeper and sounder teaching has given us the light which his mere temperamental bias would now fain shut out? Who has in our day widened and consolidated our knowledge as he has done? And what surer contribution is there than that to the reconstruction of our life? So imperishable is the service that our last words must needs be the acknowledgment of it. In the name of those who endorse all the criticism we have passed on what we reckon the perishable part of the thinker's work, do we finally turn and say: Hail, spiritual Father and honoured Master, who first trained us to shape our path through the forest by the eternal guidance of sun and stars; though we now must needs turn against the barriers you have raised, the gymnastic you yourself have given, and the woodcraft you yourself have taught, yet would we claim to hold ourselves of your great lineage still; and when we in turn grow "wan with many memories," it is your name and not another's that we shall hand to our children as that of the foremost founder of the new line, the greatest herald of the new age.

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[1] See *The Man versus the State*, p. 64.

EPILOGUE.

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OUTLINES OF SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION.

It cannot, I think, fairly be said of the foregoing criticisms, in so far as they deal with social problems, that they are "merely negative," as the phrase goes; but it may help towards a judgment on them to set forth finally and briefly such a scheme of socio-political action as they would justify. On the side of philosophy and religion, it may, perhaps, be said that I have offered negations without "putting something in the place" of the doctrines negatived. Such an objection, if it be made, I must take leave to dismiss as a fallacy in terms. Really to show that any belief is unsound is, in the nature of the case, to substitute for it a true belief to a greater or less extent; and if there be no demonstration or persuasion, there has been no effectual negation to complain of. A refutation of supernaturalist morality means the positing of a better; and the refutation of a supernaturalist theory amounts to the establishment of another. What is virtually implied by many who complain of "negative" criticism in religious matters, is that new *institutions* ought to be proposed to take the place of those discredited; which is quite a new thesis, requiring separate proof, which is never given. But as to social reform, it may be justly demanded that he who proclaims the error or insufficiency of teachings before the world should indicate clearly what he himself proposes to do, whether to innovate or conserve, and why. The close of a series of studies such as the foregoing, is not the place for anything more than an outline of the kind; but some such outline is due both to approvers and antagonists.

And at a time when not only advanced Radicalism but so-called English Socialism seems to be swallowed up in the agitation for an Eight Hours Law, it seems specially fitting, if not profitable, to make an attempt to lay down a broader path for political reform. Individualists of all schools are united in opposing the Eight Hours movement, which thus tends to become, for many onlookers, typical of the politics that aim at the prevention of poverty and the improvement of the status of the workers generally. There could be no more mischievous misconception. The cry for an Eight Hours Law represents, to begin with, merely the helpless acceptance, by the mass, of a proposal which offers a direct relief on such terms as to appeal to the weakest intelligence; and, beyond that, the adoption of that cry by some publicists for ulterior reasons, and by others because they fear to oppose it. Socialists are found asking for the Eight Hours Law as a means towards Socialism, when the whole of their professed economic and sociological doctrine commits them to the proposition that an Eight Hours Day can only be reached through Socialism. Radicals, who defend Free Trade on grounds of economic induction, accept this project in defiance of all economic induction. It only needs that the Tory party should adopt the cry, as they would fain have adopted that of Fair Trade, in order that it should be carried to the stage of legislation. After that, the consequences are easy of prediction. The measure will wholly fail to keep up the demand for labour, because the demand for goods will either slacken or be kept up by the cheapening action of new machinery, which will limit employment; and the cause of industrial and social reform will be discredited by the failure of a scheme which has gained a larger measure of popular support within a few years than any other now before us. At least let some of us try, whatever is to be the upshot, to keep a saner set of principles in the field.

1. All democratic political movements, the wise as well as the unwise, have in view the attainment of a greater measure of equality in material well-being. To the same end have been directed all the schemes of social reform, ancient and modern, which have ever won reputation among men. To prevent or limit inequality of wealth has been the hope of every Utopist, whether his ideal were one of Spartan simplicity or of ever-increasing fulness of life for the individual; and in inequality will be found the generalisation of the social evils which have provoked the protest of social reformers, as distinct from moralists, of nearly every school—the Carlyles, the Ruskins, the Owens, the

Fouriers, the Mills, the Marxes, the Lassalles. The iniquity of the state of things in which men can buy all sorts of service while doing none in return—this is the constant text of Ruskin, who has in some regards gone straighter to the roots of social evil than any other modern. Even Comte, who reacted violently against the democratic spirit, sought improved conditions for the workers while proposing to keep them always in tutelage.

2. The problem for democrats then is, how *is* inequality to be prevented or limited? How is the constant tendency to accumulation, and the endowment of idlers, to be checked by State or corporate action, without striking harmfully at those instincts of justice and self-love which hold societies together? Antiquity gives us plenty of illustrations of the extreme easiness of destroying the very possibilities of social progress by ignorant attempts to reach the desired end by short cuts. The French Revolution is the great modern illustration of the danger of attempting to establish a measure of social justice without a stable machinery. We, in this country, have a tolerably stable political machinery, which has thus far been made to yield a certain amount of reform, a certain measure of social justice. Cannot that machinery be made to do more? Our business here is to show that it can. The machinery itself, of course, needs much extension and improvement, to the end of making the franchise at once universal and effective. Among such improvements must be included the payment of Members of Parliament. It will here be assumed that such reforms will be secured either prior to or concurrently with those proposed below.

3. While many causes go to produce inequality of wealth, of which the extreme embodiment is an idle rich class, it is plain that certain actions of the body politic, through its present machinery, have this effect in a high degree. The institution of a National Debt, which, under the hands of each of the leading parties, suffers but a slight diminution from decade to decade, is in practice a means of maintaining a certain number of individuals and families in lifelong idleness. It also provides, of course, a means by which some industrious persons, engaged in lucrative pursuits, may provide for a comfortable repose in

their old age ; but its typical outcome may, for practical purposes, be defined as the maintenance of idlers in comfort. It ought, therefore, to be the first duty of political reformers to get rid of the debt as speedily as may be, seeing that the wealth which it thus secures to non-workers must needs be created from year to year by the workers. The establishment of a National Debt is a sin against the enlightened moral sense to begin with ; but all that can be done without grave danger to the stability of society is to pay it off with all possible speed.

4. As it is, the interest on the debt is met by means of taxation, raised by various means and on no consistent principle. The true principle of taxation, however, can be easily stated to the satisfaction of thinking men, and has been nominally current in a set of classic maxims, associated with the name of Adam Smith, for over a hundred years. Of these maxims the chief is that a just taxation would *involve equality of sacrifice.* This, plainly, is not even approximately attained at present ; since certain objects of general consumption, bought by all classes, such as tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcoholic drinks, are made to yield a large amount of revenue. Thus, since the individual power of consumption of these articles varies little as to quantity, the poorer classes pay on the average about as much *per head* on their food as the rich. Some reformers, who see no way of checking drunkenness save by making drink dear and, in that way, difficult to get, take satisfaction in these gross inequalities of taxation as regards liquors ; though it is known that low wages (and raised prices either of foods or liquors mean lowered wages) do not hinder men from undue drinking, but probably encourage it, by debarring them from dearer forms of entertainment. Even apart from the taxation of liquors, however, the taxation of admittedly or presumably innocuous foods represents a plain violation of the accepted maxim.

5. Equality of sacrifice, it is plain, can only be approached on a system of direct taxation—that is, by the taxation of incomes. In so far, however, as taxation of income is already enforced, it is fully admitted that equality of sacrifice cannot be secured by taxing all incomes even proportionally. The fixing of a limit below which none are taxed,

though the incomes of the workers are mostly below that limit, is an admission that a certain minimum of comfort should be allowed-for before a citizen is asked to make any special sacrifice in the name of public action. No doubt, if indirect taxation were abolished, some reason would exist for proposing taxation of incomes below the present limit; but still the principle of a limit would be recognised. What is needed further, in order to secure a tolerable measure of equality of sacrifice, is a taxation of incomes at an increasing rate. Sixpence in the pound, for a man with £200 a year, means a much greater sacrifice than does the same rating for a man with £2,000 a year. The rate, to satisfy the developed sense of justice, as expressed in the classic maxim of economic science, should be *graduated.* Such a rate was actually enforced in Holland last century, and may be enforced again.[1]

6. One object of a reformed taxation should clearly be to pay off more rapidly the debt which now constitutes a burden on the national industry. In no other way can the State so directly and so impartially act for the good of all ; and the failure so to act means the maintenance of an obvious injustice. A perpetual debt is a perpetual iniquity, and a perpetual support to an idle class. Taxation should therefore be such as to yield an annual surplus.

7. But if we pay off the debt with all possible rapidity, one certain result will be a check to the consumption, that is, to the buying, of those who have their principal returned to them each year, and of the class of investors generally. The amount of capital seeking safe investments is now always in excess of the opportunities; and to throw a large extra amount on the market annually must needs lower the rate of interest all round, causing investors to restrict their buying proportionally ; those without any investments being specially constrained to retrench. It matters not, from the point of view of trade, that such retrenchment implies lessened luxury among idlers : the righteousness of that in itself cannot hinder the depression of trade by reason of restricted demand. Thus, were no precautions taken, the first result of a righteous effort to remove an unjust burden from the shoulders of industry would be, under our commercial system, to plunge industry

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[1] See the anonymous *Essay on Trade* variously attributed to Decker and Richardson, ed. 1756, pp. 17-18.

in distress. It will therefore be necessary to find preventives if we are to be justified in taking the proposed course.

8. It is conceivably possible to prevent, by one kind of public action, the evil results which would follow on a rapid liquidation of the National Debt. That action would be, the creation of a special demand for labour by the establishment of public works—that is, schemes which should not aim at doing work that is already being done, or meeting a demand already being supplied. Such works would be, the rebuilding of cities, the utilisation of sewage. Of course, the building of ironclads would have the same primary results, but in that case the ultimate gain to general happiness would be immeasurably smaller than that accruing from undertakings such as those before specified. And in undertaking such works the body politic would be interfering with no vested interests, and undertaking nothing that it can be pretended would be better done by private enterprise. Only those extreme Individualists could object who are prepared to face any amount of inequality, of private aggrandisement at the public expense, rather than see the State undertake any active functions whatever. And what would result would be this—that the demand for labour would increase the effective demand for many, if not for all, commodities, thus giving either direct or indirect relief to those industries which would otherwise suffer from the throwing of large sums of capital on the hands of the investing class.

9. Thus far we have seen how the State may do what it is bound in equity to do towards limiting the idle living that has hitherto been promoted by its own action—that is to say, by the corporate action of the citizens through their political machinery. But this action of the State, it is clear, will not make an end of idle living: it will leave a variety of sources of idle living unaffected, save in so far as its action has lowered interest all round. All interest-yielding concerns—notably the railways, banks, gas and water companies, and insurance offices—would continue to furnish a means whereby persons who amass fortunes in the course of trade or commercial gambling can endow an idle family in perpetuity. Further, the "unearned increment" of ground-rent must continue to maintain many in an idleness no less complete than

that of the inheritor of stocks. An agricultural landlord, indeed, is not typically an idle person ; he has a certain labour-function, which he may fulfil well or ill. Theoretically it is the "mere stock-holder" who is "the idlest person upon earth" (Essay before cited, p. 78) ; but the drawer of ground-rents in cities is practically on the same footing with society.

10. Now, we have laid down as a general principle of taxation the test of *equality of sacrifice ;* but in the case of the typically idle rent-drawer or dividend-drawer, it is plain that mere equivalence of money sacrifice will not equalise him with fellow-citizens who have their incomes in return for some service rendered to society. There should, therefore, be a fiscal discrimination against idly acquired incomes, in order to satisfy in some measure the principle laid down. It may, no doubt, be argued that many nominal services to society, such as stock-jobbing and gambling in buying and selling, are really processes of waste which impoverish rather than aid society. Discrimination of that sort, however, would be impracticable for fiscal purposes ; and we must make our machinery workable. What we *can* apply is a discrimination between (well or ill) earned and unearned incomes ; including in the latter all dividends (even when drawn by persons who "earned" the money they had invested) and all land-rents, as determined either by market-competition or (where necessary) special valuation. Such valuations can be made where landlords supervise or work their farm-lands, as where they hold lands idle ; and thus will be set up a discrimination between the idle and the working landowner, since the work of the latter will necessarily be allowed for. In this way there would be avoided the inequity led up to by those who urge the drawing of all taxation from land only, on the score that it is typically and naturally common property, while all other property may fairly be held privately. This distinction is plainly fallacious. Much of the "other property," as houses, plainly consists of removed portions of the land—stones, metals, bricks, etc. ; and there goes on thus at all times, to the end of private enrichment, a consumption of portions of that land which is declared to be inalienable common property. These removed portions should also in consistency be taxed. Merely to tax objects of property, however, would be to miss entirely the just

principles of taxation. The measure must be, not the nature of the objects individually possessed, but individual *command of wealth*, special regard being had to the distinction between idly acquired and other incomes. Command of wealth is command of services, and the principle of equality of sacrifice involves some regard to the giving or not giving of services in return. As regards the absolute destruction of land in the shape of coal, finally, there ought clearly to be an immediate provision that the State should receive the proceeds.

11. In this way, then, idle living may be still further limited, in strict conformity with the prescriptions of equity, the extra taxation thus obtained being devoted to the removal of State debt, and to the simultaneous creation of public works, as above provided for. And inasmuch as railways, tramways, gas-works, and water-works, are all of the nature of State-conferred monopolies, their very existence depending on special concessions from the body corporate, that body may with perfect justice proceed to take such concerns into its own hands, buying them up at a price fixed by an average of market prices for stock in a given number of previous years. In this way the profit hitherto made by the individual shareholders in such concerns may be municipalised or nationalised, and another source of idle living and inequality abolished. On the same principles, the facilities possessed by the State, in respect of its credit and resources, for carrying on the business of banking, should be utilised. At present the State makes banking a monopoly, by limiting competition, and thus establishing a specific source of profit. Plainly then it has the right to avail itself of that source of profit, by taking over the existing banking concerns or establishing a system which shall supersede them.

12. All this, it is obvious, must be a gradual process. Were it otherwise, the compensating system of public works could not keep pace with the withdrawal of demand for goods by the hitherto investing classes. In any case, that will represent a probable risk of industrial disorganisation. But while on the one hand the classes hitherto living on interest will be moved more and more to lessen their consumption, on the other hand the working classes will be less and less encouraged

to restrict their consumption to the end of "saving money" for investment on their own behalf. Provision for old age will have to be made in some other manner, to be separately considered. The progressive decline of interest will be such as to check, on their part, that "saving" which at present puts a limit to consumption and therefore to production and to employment. That is to say, the workers, assuming them to be employed, will not simply consume more of the easily supplied goods which they now consume, but will presumably be led to raise their standard of comfort, and to demand higher-class products, including those which specially necessitate hand-labour, and so involve employment which machinery cannot supersede. But such raising of the standard of comfort must be in terms, among other things, of limitation of the number of children born; for if increased incomes among the workers concur with not only a higher birth-rate but the much lower death-rate which would presumably result for a time, under the improved conditions supposed, then there will be increased consumption only of food and machine-made products, which last, in the terms of the case, do not involve an increasing demand for labour, but may be provided with relatively decreasing amounts of labour. The extra children born would thus speedily constitute an increasing unskilled proletariat, for which the State could not continue to provide labour or public works. The standard of house, for instance, could not go on rising. The material conditions of civilisation cannot conceivably go on long improving while there is no advance in the higher life; and there cannot be such an advance in the case supposed. What is more, since the higher forms of consumption formerly depending on the demand of the rich and idle classes would fall away, there would be a positive decline in the arts of civilisation. In fine, the Democratic State, aiming at the prevention of inequality, must limit its birth-rate if its civilisation is to progress.

13. If this be admitted, it becomes important to decide whether the State ought to promulgate from the outset the need of the prudential restraint. That lesson cannot be learned in a day, cannot be learned just at the moment that the new gains would be otherwise lost, as some Socialists seem to suppose. Ought not then the doctrine to be publicly laid down as soon as the State begins to take measures which will of

themselves encourage population? Theoretically, it ought; but this is just one of the matters in regard to which State action is most difficult; and on the other hand the desired end may be attained by a propaganda which combines the doctrine of family-limitation with those of political reform above set forth. Already the propaganda of Neo-Malthusianism has been carried to such an extent as to check the birth-rate, thus doing more to limit misery in our midst in recent years than any other agency which can be named. It seems reasonable to suppose that this propaganda, which already appeals so effectively to the majority of rational men and women when once they have thought out the problems of married life and society, will spread more and not less when an increasing number of the workers are put in the way of studying those problems in some degree of comfort. In the meantime, society as a whole owes it to the workers to take the steps before specified for the removal of unjust burdens and the checking of inequality. That duty is primary; and if once it is begun to be performed, all concerned will be more and more led to see the absolute necessity of intelligently limiting population at the same time that former social checks to rate of increase are removed.

14. When a State has, by a continuous process of democratic reform, extending over a considerable time, gradually and therefore permanently got rid of the more easily removed conditions of social inequality, it may conceivably proceed to remove the other conditions also. That is to say, it may nationalise or socialise one industry after another, as it has socialised one civic monopoly after another; and it may nationalise the entire cultivation of the land. But these are clearly not the measures which can come first; and it only confuses the problem of progress to put them forward on all fours with measures which are more or less immediately practicable. While we are getting rid of State debt, nationalising monopolies, checking inequality, and giving steadiness to industrial comsumption, industries will be getting ready for nationalisation under the influence of those tendencies which are now seen to be organising so many on a comprehensive scale. A syndicated industry—to say nothing of what may be done by co-operation—will be incomparably easier to nationalise than one that is still in a chaos of competition ; and it is folly to talk of the State's grappling with the most difficult problems of all while the simpler are untouched. Let the simpler be dealt with, and at once the whole conditions will begin to improve. It is painfully instructive, on the other hand, to see how the advocates of the most difficult and unprepared-for State interferences are ready to catch at the most trivial and superficial of immediate measures when these seem to catch the popular taste. The loudest advocates of such a futility as an Eight Hours Law are found to be those who have just before been proposing to take up the social system by the roots. So do the extremes of unwisdom meet. And all the while the workers, instead of being taught to use their enormous political power on scientific lines, so as radically and steadily to modify all the conditions of their life, are led one day to halloo for the impossible and on the next to shout for the insignificant, doing nothing the while to check the abuses under which they groan. If ever responsibilities in these matters come to be allotted, the prophets of Socialism will not go unstigmatised.

15. It cannot be overlooked that as the State approaches more and more to the democratic ideal of social equality, it must take upon it the provision of some substitute for those arrangements which under the previous regimen secured a certain amount of literature, science, and art, over and above what would be elicited by mere market demand. It may be that in time the normal demand of a cultured people will suffice to secure a constant literary and artistic advance. But in the stage in which idle life is being cut down, and the people is only beginning to move towards those higher forms of consumption which have been associated with idle or endowed life, there will be grave risk of retrogression. Hitherto our best literature, science, and art have largely depended on the accidental possession of inherited income, or family advantages, by persons of genius.[1] Even now, when the demand for some sorts of literature and art is extending more and more among the less leisured classes, it is found that the output increases much more on the side of inferiority than on that of excellence. Though the idle

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[1] See the paper, "Our Drift: III.—Compensations," in the *National Reformer*, May 5th, 1889.

class also increases, it does not seem to yield an increasing number of highly gifted writers, thinkers, and scholars, though perhaps it produces more good pictorial artists. Science, on the other hand, is fostered to a considerable extent by the general development. It remains for democracy to provide such special encouragements as shall more than compensate for the random gains to literature and art that have arisen in the past from the chance endowments of genius and research. And when we consider the enormous mass of possible capacity from which a systematic organisation of culture may select—the mass, namely, of those who at present have no chance of self-development—there can be no question of the possibility of as great an advance on this as on any other lines. For illustrative precedent, Athens may serve.

16. For the rest, there are a hundred reforms which will naturally fall to be made by the spirit of enlightenment as the main structure of society is being gradually modified. The educational system, it may be hoped, will be bettered year after year, as the "torrent of children" is checked. The penal system, so blind, so unscientific, so wasteful, cannot long go unreformed ; and the substitution of a decent system of civil justice for the present benighted method, under which the richer litigant buys the services of the more skilful sophist,[1] will probably be one of the steps towards the disappearance of litigation. In all respects, law will naturally be framed more and more considerately as it is more and more controlled by the general intelligence. The utilisation of sewage and the sanitary reconstruction of cities have been assumed as the first kinds of public undertaking which will be set up by way of preventing the industrial depression that would otherwise result from the liquidation of the National Debt. Provision for old age and sickness, finally, will have to be made by a system which may be termed either one of pensions or one of "national insurance" ; the doing of work by every citizen while he has health and strength being his title to support from the common fund when he is sick or superannuated. Beyond that, these outlines of a systematic democracy may be filled up by the student for himself.

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[1] See the papers, "The Reform of 'Justice,'" in the *National Reformer*, May 4th and 11th, 1890.

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